LADY HESTER STANHOPE

ROUNDELL

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

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LADY HESTER STANHOPE

Hester Lucy Stanhope

Frontispiece].

LADY HESTER STANHOPE

BY MRS. CHARLES ROUNDELL

AUTHOR OF "COWDRAY, THE HISTORY OF A GREAT ENGLISH HOUSE," ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

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TO

MY SISTER

ALICE TOLLEMACHE

PREFACE

No account of Lady Hester Stanhope has been placed before the public since the six volumes, containing her Memoirs and her Travels, were published in 1846 by her resident physician Dr. Meryon. These books, now long out of print, have furnished most of the details contained in the present volume. They describe Lady Hester Stanhope's life in Syria and then on the Lebanon, where at first she reigned in almost sovereign state, and then closed her strange eventful life in a seclusion which was rarely broken.

To Dr. Meryon's account have now been added the narratives of the few visitors and travellers whom Lady Hester Stanhope received, including Silk Buckingham, Kinglake, and Lamartine. Special interest will be taken in the account of the visit to Djoun in the

winter of 1895 made by Lady Hester Stanhope's niece, the Duchess of Cleveland, and now printed by special permission of the Earl of Rosebery and Lady Leconfield.

J. R.

September, 1909.

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LADY HESTER STANHOPE

CHAPTER I

EARLY YEARS

Lady Hester Stanhope, born in March 1776, was the eldest of the three daughters of Charles, Viscount Mahon, who in 1786 succeeded his father as third Earl Stanhope. Her mother was Lord Mahon's first wife, Lady Hester Pitt, the daughter of the first Earl of Chatham and the favourite sister of William Pitt. This lady was described by one of her husband's cousins as "A woman rarely to be met with; wise, temperate, and prudent; by nature cheerful; without levity; a warm friend; and free from all the petty vices that attend little minds."

Unfortunately for Lady Mahon's family she

died when her eldest daughter was only four years old: had she lived to bring up her children it is probable that Lady Hester Stanhope would not have developed "the fierce eccentricity," (to quote Lord Rosebery's words in his *Life of Pitt*), which characterized her.

Lord Mahon, overwhelmed with grief, felt unequal to the charge of his children, and within a few months he married a cousin of his late wife's, Louisa Grenville, daughter of Henry Grenville, then the Governor of Barbadoes. She had three sons, one of whom, Charles Stanhope, was killed at Corunna, to the lasting grief of his half-sister Lady Hester.

When Lord Mahon became Earl Stanhope he found that his second wife lived only for society. She did not care for her step-daughters, and her cold, stiff manner repelled them so much that the youngest, Lady Lucy, was wont to say that she should not have recognized her step-mother if she had met her in the street.

Lord Stanhope, on the contrary, had no taste for society, although his children saw

equally little of him. He was a man of remarkable talent, and really a mechanical genius, always absorbed in inventions, some of which proved of lasting value. Lord Stanhope had been educated as a Republican at Geneva, and during the French Revolution he became a violent Jacobin. He appeared in London with his hair unpowdered; he called himself Citizen Stanhope; he apprenticed one of his sons to a blacksmith, intending to apprentice another to a shoemaker; and he regularly sent his daughter Hester to mind turkeys on a common. Lord Stanhope's family used to speak with well-grounded alarm of his "Republican fits," for at one time he sold six hundredweight of gold plate, and removed the tapestry from the walls of his house at Chevening in Kent, (both plate and tapestry having been presented in 1808 to the first Earl Stanhope when commanding the British forces in Spain). He also parted with his horses and carriages, to the great inconvenience of his delicate wife; and there was a story that his daughter Lady Hester induced him to keep one plain carriage by walking out to meet him in a muddy lane mounted on a

pair of stilts. Lord Stanhope of course detested anything approaching to finery in dress, and if he saw his wife or one of his daughters in a becoming gown he would take it away, and replace it by another made of the coarsest and ugliest material he could find. He believed that he himself gave up all the comforts of life; he slept in an uncarpeted room with all the windows open, yet he was inconsistent enough to pile twelve blankets on his bed.

Lord Stanhope, like his daughter Hester, was a good fighter, and on one occasion when he had forced a division in the House of Lords and had found himself without a single supporter, he was honestly delighted with what he called his "Glorious Minority of One." A tyrant in his own family, Lord Stanhope refused to send his sons either to school or to college, and they picked up what education they could from his secretary, the Rev. Jeremiah Joyce, author of the well-known *Scientific Dialogues*. This unfortunate clergyman was arrested in Lord Stanhope's house on a charge of treason, and underwent a term of imprisonment for an offence

of which he seems to have been perfectly innocent.

As time went on, the position of Lord Stanhope's sons became intolerable to them, and, although closely watched, they managed in turn to leave home, Lady Hester herself contriving the escape to the Continent of the eldest, whom she called "Charming, Incomparable Mahon." Lady Stanhope had always left her daughters entirely to the care of a French governess who taught them nothing. She devoted her attention to the improvement of their figures, and pinched their waists between two boards which were laced together with all the force their maid could use. The governess also attempted to flatten Lady Hester's insteps, but in this she did not succeed. Lady Hester was always very proud of the height of her instep, and in later life she was wont to say that a little kitten could creep under the sole of her foot.

Lord Stanhope disliked his daughters. He married the youngest and prettiest, Lady Lucy, to a country surgeon when she was only sixteen; and the second, Lady Griselda, took refuge in a cottage at Walmer belonging

to her uncle Mr. Pitt, till she married an officer. Lady Hester remained with her father till the year 1800. Lord Stanhope's versatile genius was extraordinary: he invented a calculating machine long before the days of Babbage; also an improved printing-press which was universally copied; and above all, in 1793, he made the first boat ever propelled by steam. This cost him twenty years of labour and large sums of money, but when he offered the invention to the Admiralty it was refused. Lord Stanhope, nothing daunted, said in the House of Lords, amid the contempt and derision of his hearers, "Some of your Lordships now sitting here will live to see steamships crossing the Atlantic." Another of Lord Stanhope's valuable discoveries was a system of rendering buildings fire-proof. To illustrate this invention he built a fire-proof wooden house, surrounded it with combustible materials, and then invited a party of friends to assemble on the upper floor. The combustibles were set alight, the flames rose to a height of eighty-seven feet, yet the guests imprisoned within this terrible circle of fire were declared not to

have suffered the slightest inconvenience from their situation.

In 1800 Lady Hester Stanhope left home and went to live with her grandmother Lady Chatham at Burton Pynsent in Somersetshire, remaining with her for two years. In 1802 she joined some friends in a short tour on the Continent, returning to find her kind grandmother dead, and herself without a home.

Up to this time Lady Hester had seen but little of her uncle Mr. Pitt. He had now formed his own habits, and had not contemplated offering her a home, yet with the greatest kindness he welcomed her to his house, of which she thenceforward acted as the mistress, receiving his guests, and devoting herself to his comfort. When Mr. Pitt was dying he said of Lady Hester, "Dear soul, I know she loves me"; and to the end of her own life her greatest pride was to be known as "Pitt's niece."

Lady Hester was twenty-seven when she went to live with Mr. Pitt. She was very tall, nearly six feet in height, and majestic in her movements. She had a perfectly oval face, bluish grey eyes (which could

sparkle with extraordinary brightness and flash with fierce anger), rather a large nose, beautiful teeth, and finely shaped hands. In her youth her skin was so delicately fair that her pearl necklace hardly showed upon it, and her abundant dark hair made the whiteness of her complexion the more remarkable. Unfortunately Lady Hester always refused to sit for her portrait, and although the doctor who was a member of her Eastern household sketched her from memory in her Turkish dress, no authentic picture of her exists.[1]

The Duchesse de Gontaut, who left France just before the Revolution, met Lady Hester at a fancy ball in London when she first came out, and describes her in her *Mémoires*.[2]

"Il y eut une fête dans un superbe jardin illuminé. Toute la société y fut, et moi-même j'y accompagnai Lady Clarendon, sa sœur, etc. Nous nous déguisâmes en diseuses de bonne aventure. Mme. Wilmot s'était fait un rôle qu'elle eût soutenu avec esprit, si l'on n'avait eu la malencontreuse idée d'avoir

[1] An unpublished sketch of Lady Hester Stanhope was discovered by Mr. Murray after these lines were written, and forms the frontispiece of this volume.

[2] *Mémoires de la Duchesse de Gontaut*, p. 104.

un âne, un véritable âne avec ses paniers, dans notre groupe! Voilà qu'en s'entendant la musique l'âne a peur, et se met à braire avec une telle persistence que Mme. Wilmot ne peut débiter une seule sentence. On nous entoura en éclatant de rire; il ne nous restait plus qu'à cacher notre honte. Ce n'est pas tout: au moment de notre départ M. Pitt amène à Mme. Pole sa nièce lady Esther Stanhope et la supplie à être son chaperon; c'était sa première entrée dans le monde. Cette recommendation devint chose difficile; lady Esther d'abord était de mauvaise humeur; la recommendation de son oncle parut lui déplaire; cependant il fallut se résoudre à se joindre à nous. Elle avait un déguisement qui n'avait de féminin que le masque. Je la voyais pour la première fois; elle me parut fort grande, fort maigre, fort décidée, fort indépendante. Quand elle vit notre âne *parler*, et nous taire, elle dit sans se gêner que nous étions plus bêtes que notre âne.

"Lady Clarendon, voulant la chaperonner, courait après elle et ne pouvait jamais l'atteindre. En passant près de nous elle nous dit: 'Ne vous occupez pas de moi, je suis indépendante.' Et Mme. Wilmot la devineresse eût pu de ce jour prévoir son avenir.

"Après la mort de M. Pitt lady Esther

Stanhope ne put se décider à prendre la vie tranquille, la vie commune à tous, celle d'un monde paisible.

"Elle quitta l'Angleterre, fut se fixer au plus haut d'une des montagnes du Liban, entourée d'un luxe Oriental et d'esclaves. Elle y fut visitée par des voyageurs curieux de la voir, mais rarement admis, surtout les Anglais. M. de Lamartine parvint jusqu'à elle. Elle n'était plus jeune alors, mais toujours belle."

Lady Hester Stanhope was very satirical, full of quick repartee and wit, her tongue sharp and her temper impetuous, (a quality on which she prided herself, because it had been a characteristic of her grandfather, the great Earl of Chatham). Dr. Meryon, who, as her travelling physician, was well acquainted with her nature, said that

"In conversation she was (when she pleased) enchanting; when she meant it, she was dignified; and at all times she was eloquent. She was excellent at mimickry, and had more wit and repartee than falls to the lot of most women. . . .

"She was courageous, morally and physically; her knowledge of human nature was profound, she could turn that knowledge to

account to the utmost even in the minutest trifles, and she was as proud as Lucifer. History she despised, having seen, she said, so much history during her own life which turned out to be false. Lady Hester had a great facility of expression, and on some occasions she introduced old proverbs with wonderful appositeness. Conversation never flagged in her company." [1]

Mr. Pitt enjoyed the society of his brilliant niece, and he had so high an opinion of her ability that when some friend remarked that Lady Hester would never marry till she found some man as clever as herself, he replied, "Then she will never marry at all." Mr. Pitt's simple habits exactly suited Lady Hester, for he enjoyed getting away from his official residence at Walmer to a farm in the neighbourhood, where he would eat bread and butter or bread and cheese, saying that at London dinners the dishes were so made-up and so unnatural that he could not touch them. His niece took great trouble in planting evergreens at Walmer to supply the want of foliage of which Mr. Pitt complained, and

[1] *Memoirs of Lady Hester Stanhope*, ii. 16.

she always accompanied him in his weekly reviews of the Volunteers, even when the heavy rains so drenched her that her riding-boots were full of water.[1]

But Lady Hester, on account of her sharp tongue, was not popular among Mr. Pitt's political friends. For instance, Mr. Pitt once thought of creating an Order of Merit, and invited suggestions from the Cabinet Ministers. One of them, the Earl of Liverpool, amid general applause proposed a combination of *red* for the English flag, *blue* for liberty, and *white* to denote purity of motive. This idea was to be submitted to George the Third, whose approval was confidently expected. "Yes," said Lady Hester, "His Majesty will be delighted with the flag. I myself think the colours charming, and I have seen the same combination very often." "But where?" asked Lord Liverpool. "Where can you have seen it?" "Why," replied she, "on the cockades of the French soldiers!"[2]

Lady Hester, however, took little interest in politics. Even when she was at the

[1] *Memoirs of Lady Hester Stanhope*, ii. 68.
[2] *Memoirs*, i. 190.

head of Mr. Pitt's household she entered very little into the political life around her, devoting herself only to her uncle's private concerns. It is tempting to speculate as to her attitude had Mr. Pitt married, for she could never tolerate a rival near her throne. She might perhaps have borne with his early love, Eleanor Eden, the eldest daughter of Lord Auckland; but she could never have been on friendly terms with the lady to whom Mr. Pitt afterwards proposed—Germaine Necker, who, when she became Madame de Staël, claimed to be the cleverest woman in Europe.

Mr. Pitt died in January 1806, and Lady Hester was again left without a home. Her uncle had not been able to make any provision for her, but she was granted an annuity of £1,200 a year by Parliament, her two sisters each receiving half that amount.

At first she took a house in London, in Montagu Square, and made it a home for her two brothers. But she was not happy. She had so long been accustomed to rule in the political society which

surrounded Mr. Pitt that she could not reconcile herself to a London life with diminished consequence.

Another reason must have contributed to her unhappiness at this time, for she seems to have been deeply attached, although perhaps not regularly engaged, to Sir John Moore. In 1808 Sir John was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the British troops sent to resist the French invasion of Spain and Portugal, and Lady Hester's brothers were both on his staff. Many letters passed between her and Sir John Moore, and several of his have been preserved. Writing to her from Lisbon on the 16th October 1808, Sir John says :

"The regiments are already marching. As soon as I have seen everything in train here I shall push on and get to their head. Pray for good weather ; if it rains the torrents will swell and be impassable, and I shall be accounted a bungler. . . . I wish you were with us. The climate now is charming ; we should give you riding enough, and in your red habit, *à l'Amazone*, you would animate and do us all much good."

Another letter, written from Salamanca on the 23rd November 1808, ended with these words:

"Farewell, my dear Lady Hester. . . . If I can beat the French, I shall return to you with satisfaction: but, if not, it will be better I shall never quit Spain.

"I remain always very faithfully and sincerely yours,

"JOHN MOORE."

In less than two months after this letter was written both Sir John Moore and Charles Stanhope fell at Corunna. Lady Hester's other brother, James Stanhope, remained with Sir John till the end, and to him his last words were spoken: "Stanhope, remember me to your sister."

Nor did Lady Hester ever forget Sir John Moore. To the end of her strange wandering life she treasured some sleeve-links which contained his hair, and it was said that she also kept, carefully locked up, a blood-stained glove which he had worn, and which she would often look at when she believed herself to be alone.

London now became intolerable to Lady Hester; she left Montagu Square and settled in a lonely Welsh farmhouse, Glen Irfon, near Builth, which she had chanced to discover during a visit to Bath. Before she went there, she had the house repaired, but her requirements were not great. She wrote to the clergyman who kindly made arrangements for her:

"I shall want the parlour; the little room over it for my bedroom, and the little room next for a dressing-room, a door to be made to communicate with the bedroom. The room over the kitchen for my maids, and a bed, in the loft or elsewhere, for a boy. The parlour must have two rush chairs or wooden ones, and be carpeted all over with green baize, or the coarse grey cloth like soldiers' great-coats. A table to dine on, a fly-table,[1] and shelves for books. The bedroom must have two chairs and a table; no bed, as I shall bring down a camp bed and furniture complete. Bedside-carpets I shall expect to find, and a chest of drawers. The dressing-room must have two chairs, a table with a looking-glass, two wash-hand

[1] A shelf to let down by hinges in the wall.

basins, two water jugs, one large stone pitcher for water, two large tumbler glasses, two large cups for soap, a tin kettle for warm water, and a little strip of carpet before the table. I shall want no attendance from any part of the family."

Lady Hester took her horses with her when she went to South Wales in the summer of 1809; she also had a cow called Prettyface, and amused herself with making butter. Milk she did not require, and she used the leaves of balm instead of tea. She seems to have liked her farmhouse, although her one sitting-room was "not more than a dozen feet square," and her brother James Stanhope visited her. She was very kind to the poor in her neighbourhood, giving away large quantities of Welsh flannel and the coarse grey cloth made by the country weavers, as well as medicine and money. She is described at this time as having "most attractive and conciliating manners, but she was neither beautiful nor handsome in any degree. Her visage was long, very full and flat about the lower part, and quite pale." Miss Elizabeth Williams had accompanied

Lady Hester on this first journey, and was devoted to her as long as she lived. Miss Williams was the daughter of persons formerly in the service of the Chatham family; and she and her sisters owed their education to the kindness of Mr. Pitt.

CHAPTER II

THE MEDITERRANEAN

Lady Hester did not long remain in Wales. She could not rest, and as her brother James was about to rejoin his regiment in Spain, she determined to accompany him as far as Gibraltar, and possibly to go on to Sicily, which was then under British protection. On the 10th February 1810 she left England, little thinking that she was never to return, or that the last five-and-twenty years of her life would be passed on a lonely mountain in Syria.

She was accompanied by her half-brother James Stanhope and his friend Mr. Nassau Sutton, Miss Williams, and a man-servant. She was by no means in good health, and had been advised to take with her a young physician named Meryon. Dr. Meryon was with her at intervals for eight-and-twenty

years, but although he seems to have done his best, Lady Hester was never quite satisfied with him, and considered that his most valuable quality consisted in his being perfectly honest in money matters.

Lady Hester and her party were given a passage to Gibraltar in the *Jason*, a frigate which was acting as convoy to a number of transports and merchantmen bound for the Mediterranean. The slow sailing of these vessels made the voyage very tedious, and the *Jason*, caught in a furious gale on the 6th March, was nearly wrecked on the shoals off Trafalgar. When Lady Hester reached Gibraltar, after a whole month at sea, she and her brother were invited by the Governor, General Campbell, to stay at the Convent, and here they met several friends. Two of these, the second Marquis of Sligo and Mr. Michael Bruce, were going to travel in Greece; Mr. Bruce was the Englishman who had contrived General Lafayette's escape from France when Napoleon had condemned him to death, and had long been James Stanhope's friend.

Gibraltar was too full of English visitors and Spanish refugees to suit Lady Hester,

and she gladly accepted a passage in another frigate, the *Cerebus*, to Malta. Captain Stanhope rejoined the Guards at Cadiz, and Mr. Sutton went to Minorca.

Lady Hester was most kindly received at Malta by the Governor, General Hildebrand Oakes, who frequently entertained her. She stayed with Mr. Fernandez, the Deputy-Commissary-General, who had married a sister of Miss Williams, and it was arranged that Miss Williams should be left at Malta when Lady Hester continued her travels farther East. Dr. Meryon much enjoyed his share of the gaieties of Malta; he speaks of the dinners of fifty or sixty covers which were of daily occurrence, and adds: "On one occasion it fell to my lot to hand a lady of rank into the supper-room after a ball, and taking a seat by her side I found myself directly opposite to the Governor, separated by the breadth (and not the length) of the table, with an Italian Duchess on his right hand, Lady Hester on his left, and a string of Lords and Ladies, and Counts and Countesses, on either hand."[1]

[1] *Travels*, i. 13

Here, in the summer of 1810, she made the acquaintance of John Cam Hobhouse, afterwards Lord Broughton. He wrote on the 27th July: "Reached Malta—Here I met Mr. Bruce and Lady Hester Stanhope, —a masculine woman, who says she would as soon live with packhorses as with women. I met her again the next day at dinner. She seems to me a violent, peremptory person." [1]

In Malta she was invited to occupy a country-house called Palazzo di San Antonio, where the Governor visited her daily. But the great heat in July disagreed with her, and a project which she had formed of going to Sicily could not be carried out owing to the threatened invasion of Murat, lately placed on the throne of Naples by Napoleon. No frigate could be spared to convey Lady Hester to Greece, where she now thought of going; but luckily, just as an American brig bound for Smyrna was about to be hired, the *Belle Poule* frigate came into Valetta Harbour from Corfu, and the captain, to use Dr. Meryon's words, "very politely offered to convey her ladyship

[1] *Recollections of a Long Life*, i. 32.

and her party to one of the Ionian Islands." This offer was accepted, and Lady Hester, having engaged an English maid, Mrs. Fry, embarked on the 2nd August 1810. Mr. Michael Bruce and Dr. Meryon accompanied her, and the party reached Zante on the 8th. After spending a fortnight in Zante, General Oswald, who was the Commander-in-Chief of the Ionian Islands,[1] furnished Lady Hester with a Government transport, in which vessel she left Zante on August 23rd. A felucca accompanied the ship in case the Turkish Governor of the fortress at the entrance of the Gulf of Lepanto should refuse admission to an English vessel, and at Patras the British Consul received the whole party.

Lord Sligo had already reached Patras in his yacht, and he joined Lady Hester Stanhope's party for an expedition to Corinth. Lord Sligo travelled with a considerable retinue, "a Tartar, two Albanians (presented to him by Veli Pasha, and superbly dressed in the costume of their country, with silver-

[1] The Ionian Islands were taken from the French by the English in 1809, and restored to Greece in 1864.

stocked pistols and silver-hilted yatagans[1]; a dragoman or interpreter; a Turkish cook; an artist to paint views and costumes; besides three English servants in livery, and one out of livery." All these, added to Lady Hester's own party, which included Mr. Bruce, the doctor, her maid, and several men-servants, made "a cavalcade of twenty-five persons, the males of which were each armed with a sabre and pistols."[2]

The Isthmus of Corinth was safely crossed on horseback, and the whole party embarked on board a small two-masted vessel hired to convey them to Athens. Just as they passed the mole or breakwater at the entrance to the Piræus, a man was seen to leap from it into the sea. "That's Lord Byron!" cried Lord Sligo, who had been at Cambridge with him, and he shouted to the swimmer to dress quickly and join the rest on shore. Lord Byron came, and he and Lord Sligo rode forward to Athens to send horses back for Lady Hester. She remained in a house taken for her at Athens for a month, and during this time Lord Byron was frequently

[1] Short curved swords. [2] *Memoirs*, i. 35.

one of her guests. They had been introduced to each other by Lord Sligo, and the first time that they met at his table Lord Byron's biographer says that "Lady Hester, with that lively eloquence for which she is so remarkable, took the poet briskly to task for the deprecating opinion which, as she understood, he entertained of all female intellect. Being but little inclined, even were he able, to sustain such a heresy against one who was in her own person such a refutation of it, Lord Byron had no other refuge from the fair orator's arguments than in assent and silence, and this well-bred deference, being, in a sensible woman's eyes, equivalent to concession, they became from henceforward most cordial friends." [1] But Lady Hester Stanhope had too much sense not to see through Lord Byron's "well-bred deference." She thought him "a strange character, his generosity was for a motive, his avarice for a motive. At one time he was mopish, and no one was to speak to him, at another he was for being jocular with everybody. I saw nothing in him but a well-bred man like many others.

[1] Moore's *Life of Byron*, i. 308.

As for poetry, it is easy enough to write verses, and as for the thoughts, who knows where he got them? Many a one picks up some old book that nobody knows anything about and gets his ideas out of it. He had a great deal of vice in his looks, his eyes set close together, and a contracted brow. The only good thing about his looks was this part," drawing her hand under the cheek down the front of her neck, "and the curl on his forehead."[1]

From Athens Lady Hester proceeded to Constantinople, starting on the 16th October 1810. For this voyage she hired a Greek *polacca*, a vessel of nearly two hundred tons, for five hundred piastres, or £25. The *polacca* was laden with wheat, part of the tribute then levied at Athens by the Turks, so that Lord Sligo, Mr. Bruce, and the doctor had to sleep on deck. The cabin, after being hastily whitewashed, was set apart for Lady Hester and her maid; and the unfortunate servants had to creep into the hold, which was filled with wheat to within two feet and a half of the deck above. Fortunately the weather

[1] *Memoirs*, iii. 193.

was fine, but the autumn nights were chilly, and the voyage was made very unpleasant by the serious quarrels among the crew. The gentlemen were obliged to sleep on their arms, as their party only numbered sixteen as against the crew of twenty, and they had great difficulty in preventing the captain from crowding the ship with twenty more passengers who came alongside. On the 22nd October Dr. Meryon writes: "Dolphins gambolled round our prow, and light airs filled our cotton sails," but on the 25th the ship was becalmed in the Sea of Marmora. The calm did not last long, for that night a gale sprang up, the situation of the *polacca* became very perilous, and the doctor, thrown out of his cot on deck, was obliged to dress to give room to the sailors in managing the vessel. This they seemed quite unable to accomplish, and "instead of doing their duty they set about collecting money from the passengers, which they tied up in a handkerchief and fastened to the tiller, making a vow to St. George that they would dedicate it to his shrine if we reached some port in safety."[1] At last all

[1] *Travels of Lady Hester Stanhope*, i. 46.

got ashore at a place called Erakli, on the Gulf of Rodosto, where Lady Hester found a house in which she could remain whilst Lord Sligo and Mr. Bruce rode to Constantinople and hired caiques for her conveyance thither. She had to wait five days, but on the 2nd November the two gentlemen returned with the boats, and at eleven o'clock at night on the 3rd Constantinople was safely reached. Lady Hester was carried in a sedan-chair to a house taken for her at Pera, and the others walked by the light of a huge lantern which was carried before them. All the baggage had gone to Smyrna.

Lady Hester took a house for the winter at Therapia, on the Bosphorus, ten miles from Constantinople, and there she received many visitors. Mr. Stratford Canning, afterwards Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, had just been appointed Minister Plenipotentiary at the Porte. He showed her great kindness and much enjoyed her society, and she wrote to England that he had behaved to her "in the civilest, kindest manner possible." Mr. Canning, on his side, wrote of her:

"Lady Hester Stanhope brought with her all the interest which attaches to a person of her sex remarkable for talent and nearly connected with a great public character. Not only was she the niece of Mr. Pitt, but she had lived for a time under the roof of that unspotted Minister in the full intimacy of close relationship and daily intercourse. She had known many whose names were familiar to me, and some with whom I was personally acquainted. She had seen much of Mr. Canning [his cousin]. On these several accounts her conversation had strong attractions for me, notwithstanding its measureless redundancy, and the not infrequent singularities it displayed. . . . General Moore appeared to be her idol, and she took an evident pleasure in talking of him."[1]

Ten months passed pleasantly away, part of the time being spent at Brusa on the coast of Asia Minor. At Constantinople Lady Hester rode on horseback on a side-saddle to witness the Sultan's procession when he visited the Mosque; and Dr. Meryon observes: "There is probably no other example of a European female having ridden through the

[1] *Life of Stratford Canning*, by Lane Poole, i. 114.

streets of Constantinople in this manner on that day; and it may be reckoned as a proof of her courage that she did so, and of her conduct that she did so without insult."

CHAPTER III

VOYAGE AND SHIPWRECK

In August 1811 Lady Hester took it into her head that she would like to spend the winter in France and to make the acquaintance of Napoleon. Party spirit at this time ran very high, and it was not easy for Lady Hester to communicate with M. de Maubourg, the French Chargé d'Affaires at Constantinople, to whom she wished to apply for a passport. At last she contrived it by meeting him on the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus, and he promised to try to obtain the passport.[1] In this he was not successful, and as Lady Hester had been seen walking with him Mr. Canning soon heard of their interview. Of course he, as British Minister, was bound to remonstrate with her, and she, greatly resenting his interference, chose

[1] *Travels*, i. 59, 91.

to consider that as he was only twenty-four (ten years younger than herself), he had no authority, even as the British Minister, over her actions. Lady Hester wrote to the Marquis Wellesley, then Secretary for Foreign Affairs, to complain that Mr. Canning was "young and inexperienced, full of zeal, but also full of prejudice." However, reflection showed Lady Hester the grievous mistake she had made, and she not only fully acknowledged Mr. Canning's kindness to her on a later occasion, but determined at once on going to Egypt instead of trying to make her way to Napoleon in Paris.

A Greek vessel was again hired, and on the 23rd October 1811 Lady Hester sailed from Constantinople for Alexandria. The party now consisted of herself and her maid Mrs. Fry, Mr. Bruce, Mr. Pearce, Dr. Meryon, four Greek men-servants, a Greek cook, and his scullion or underling. Live sheep and poultry were put on board the vessel, as well as wine and everything that could make the voyage comfortable; the ship was thoroughly cleaned, and the hold was divided into small single cabins. The voyage

began ill with contrary winds and delay, and when at length the island of Scio was reached strong gales caused another delay of ten days. Dr. Meryon gives a graphic account of the misfortunes which followed.[1]

"The wind becoming fair we unmoored from Scio and were carried without any accident as far as the island of Rhodes, where we stopped but a few hours to take in water and fresh bread. We then sailed, little imagining how soon we should return thither, and quitted Rhodes on Saturday night, the 23rd November. We ran for two days under a press of sail, and must have made half our way to Alexandria, when the sky became lowering, and a southerly wind obliged us to beat to windward the whole of the 25th. In the evening the gale increased. On the 27th the ship sprang a leak, and the cry of 'All hands to the pumps!' immediately showed that some danger impended."

The vessel was in fact caught by one of the furious gales known in the Eastern Mediterranean as "Levanters"; the pumps proved to be useless, and, in spite of the exertions

[1] *Travels of Lady Hester Stanhope*, i. 97.

made by the passengers in baling the deck with buckets, the water increased so rapidly on board that the pilot determined to run back to Rhodes.

Dr. Meryon's narrative continues:

"In the meantime Lady Hester Stanhope, who had been informed of the leak, became aware from the confusion which prevailed that great danger was apprehended. She dressed herself and quietly directed her maid to furnish a small box with a few articles of the first necessity, to be prepared against the worst. There was a cask of wine in the cabin, which had been brought for us to drink on the voyage, and this her Ladyship with her own hands drew, and then herself distributed it among the sailors to cheer them under the labour, which now became very severe.

"The wind had now risen to a complete gale, and about mid-day the ship heeled gunwale down, and was so water-logged that she never recovered an upright position afterwards. As our situation became more alarming, two or three of the Greek servants began to lose courage, and, throwing themselves flat on the deck, they vented the most womanish lamentations, nor could they be induced by either threats or promises to work

any more. One shook as if he had an ague fit; others invoked the Virgin Mary with continuous exclamations of '*Panagia mou!*' ('Oh thou all holiness!')

"Things wore this unpromising appearance till about three in the afternoon, when the south-west point of the Island of Rhodes was discovered on our weather-bow. The pilot immediately put the ship's head as direct to the land as the wind would permit; every person took fresh courage; and our exertions became greater than ever. But the ship was no longer obedient to the helm, and we lost in lee-way what we gained in progress. We were apparently not more than two miles from the island, and it was resolved to let go an anchor.

"The anchor, however, proved of no use: the ship still drove, and the leak had gained so much upon us that there was every probability she could not long keep afloat. It was now resolved that the long-boat should be hoisted out, as our only resource. This being made known to Lady Hester, the order was given that no one should burden the boat with luggage, and it was with much difficulty lowered into the sea. Whilst this was doing, I went down into the cabin and took from my trunk a bag of dollars, which, with my sabre and a pistol, was all that I saved."

It was manifestly impossible to reach the island itself; all that could be hoped for was that the boat might reach a rock, half a mile from the wrecked ship, and almost hidden by the blinding showers of spray. Dr. Meryon hurried up on deck just in time to jump into the boat, already crowded by twenty-four persons, and the sailors let go the rope. They were in a desperate case; every moment the waves beat over them and threatened to swamp the boat, but they succeeded at last in reaching a little creek at the side of the rock. This creek would only just admit the boat, and the rock itself was small; still it held a tiny cave, into which Lady Hester and Mrs. Fry managed to creep. The others threw themselves down on the wet rocks, and, drenched as they were, they slept from sheer exhaustion. When they awoke they found that not only was there no fresh water on the rock, but that in the hurry of escaping from the ship both provisions and water had been forgotten.

Dr. Meryon goes on:

"About midnight, 27th November, the wind

abated a little, and the captain proposed attempting to reach the land, averring that it was as well to perish at once as to be starved to death. He suggested that if he took only the crew away with him there would be a much better chance of safety, and that once arrived on the land he could engage boats for our deliverance; whereas if all went together the boat would probably sink. These arguments seemed valid, and, accompanied by our prayers, the party launched off. It was agreed that when they reached the shore they should make a fire as a signal of their safety; and in the course of two hours we saw the wished-for blaze.

"Daylight came, and we still remained on the rock, without food or drink, anxiously looking for the return of the crew. Our reflections were by no means comfortable; for, knowing the character of the Greeks, we could not be sure that, once safe themselves, they would not abandon us to our fate. We watched all day, but it was not until about a quarter of an hour before sunset that a black speck was seen on the sea, which we at length distinguished to be a boat. It contained the crew, but they were without the captain, he having declined the danger of coming off again. They brought us bread,

cheese, water, and arrack,[1] and thus, after thirty hours' fasting, we satisfied our hunger and thirst.

"But another danger now stared us in the face. The sailors had found liquor on shore, and had made themselves drunk. They grew riotous and insolent, and in the course of the night they declared their resolution of rowing back to the shore. In vain we requested that they would wait till daylight, till the wind abated, or till the rain was over; they were determined; and as those who remained behind on the rock could have no chance but to perish, we were compelled to go with them.

"The sea was high, and as the sailors were pulling almost in the face of it their labour was very severe. But, for the same reason, the nearer we approached the shore the smoother the water became. At last the stern touched, and a wave that filled the boat from stem to stern at once overwhelmed us. Lady Hester was hoisted out of the boat, which soon afterwards was swamped and staved in, and each of us got to shore as he could.

"Close to where we landed there was a small windmill, in which we accommodated Lady

[1] A strong spirit, distilled from rice.

Hester Stanhope and her maid Mrs. Fry in the best manner we could, whilst a blazing fire was made outside, round which the rest collected. But we were soon joined by Mrs. Fry, who was so terrified by the large rats which ran freely up and down the ropes in the mill, that nothing could induce her to remain inside with her mistress. The miller was despatched to a village near at hand to bring conveyances to carry us to a place of shelter." [1]

The conveyances found were mules and asses, and the place of shelter was a miserable stable swarming with fleas, in "a hamlet the most wretched that can be conceived of as a habitation for human beings." Yet here they had to remain, whilst Dr. Meryon proceeded to the town of Rhodes to search for a house.

Lady Hester was so uncomfortable in the stable that she moved to a village, where, exhausted by hunger and fatigue, she fell ill. She was received into the house of the principal resident, named Philippaki, and kindly treated. Mrs. Fry at all times had a

[1] *Travels*, i. 101.

great aversion to learning any foreign tongue, and now insisted on calling Lady Hester's host Philip Parker; in the same way she altered the name of Lady Hester's janissary in Egypt into *Mr. Farr* from Mustapha, a weakness which Dr. Meryon seems to have looked on with contempt.

About the middle of December Lady Hester was strong enough to undertake the three days' journey to Rhodes, riding over the roughest and wildest of paths, and she owned that she felt sadly fatigued. She wrote to a friend in England that her illness was due to "starving for thirty hours on a bare rock, without even fresh water, being half-naked and drenched with wet, having traversed an almost trackless country over dreadful rocks and mountains, partly on foot and partly on a mule."

In another letter Lady Hester said: "Everything I possessed I have lost: had I attempted to have saved anything others would have done the same, and the boat would have been lost."

From this time, perhaps not unwillingly, she determined to dress as a Turkish gentle-

man. She had lost all her clothes in the wreck, and it would have been very difficult to get a fresh outfit from England, there being then no regular communication with the Levant. On the 12th January 1812, writing to her London solicitor, Mr. Murray, she said:

"To collect clothes in this part of the world so as to dress like an Englishwoman would be next to impossible; to dress as a Turkish woman would not do, because then I must not be seen to speak to a man. Therefore I have nothing for it but to dress as a Turk—not like the Turks you are in the habit of seeing in England, but as an Asiatic Turk in a travelling-dress. This is just a sort of silk and cotton shirt; next to that a striped silk and cotton waistcoat; over that another waistcoat with sleeves; and then a short cloth jacket without sleeves, beautifully worked in coloured twist. A large pair of breeches, Turkish boots, a sash into which goes a brace of pistols, a knife, and a sort of short sword; a belt for powder and shot, made of variegated leather, which goes over the shoulder, and pouches of the same. On the head a turban, put on in a

particular way, with a large bunch of natural flowers at one side. This is the dress of the common Asiatic Turk; the great men are covered with gold and embroidery, and nothing can be more splendid and becoming than their dress."

After a time Lady Hester found it impossible to arrange a turban comfortably over her hair, and she therefore followed the Turkish fashion of keeping her head shaved. In a later letter she says: "I can assure you that if I ever looked well in anything it is in the Asiatic dress; it is quite different from the European Turk's." Lady Hester always liked the Turks; as for the Greeks, she said: "They are apt to shuffle and shuffle; you never can depend on them for one moment."

CHAPTER IV

EGYPT

Lady Hester Stanhope was very anxious to leave Rhodes. A Turk there had kindly lent her his house in the middle of an orange-garden, "the houses on the outside of the walls, where the Franks live, being," she writes, "only fit for poultry." But it was not at all easy to get away from the island. At last, Captain Henry Hope who commanded the *Salsette* frigate, heard of her uncomfortable plight, and offered her and her party a passage to Alexandria. "*Chivalry Hope*," was Lady Hester's name for him, and she declared that the old Knights of Malta and Rhodes could not have deserved more praise than he. But ill-luck at sea pursued her again; the *Salsette* was delayed by storms, and Alexandria was not reached till the 11th February 1812. In the meantime

Dr. Meryon had gone to Smyrna, by means of a series of open boats, in order to buy clothes, and whatever was needed for the Egyptian journey on which Lady Hester was now bent. He rejoined her just before she left Rhodes, and found that all her servants had been in rebellion. They had been promised new clothes to replace those spoiled and lost in the wreck, and as these clothes could not be bought in Rhodes they were told to wait till they got to Alexandria. This the servants chose to think was an evasion on Lady Hester's part, and accordingly they threatened to leave her service. They imagined that she would at once order the new clothes, instead of which Lady Hester dismissed them all on the spot. She proceeded with only Mrs. Fry and a clever young Greek who spoke three or four languages, and who had been for a few weeks in Dr. Meryon's service as "a footboy."

Colonel Misset, the British Resident at Alexandria, sent his secretary to welcome Lady Hester, and he conducted her to a small house which had been taken for her; Mr. Bruce, Mr. Pearce, and Dr. Meryon

being received by different families in the city. But Alexandria did not please Lady Hester at all. She thought the place "quite hideous," and said that if the rest of Egypt were to be like it she should leave the country as soon as possible. However, a fortnight had to be spent at Alexandria in finding fresh servants, and in purchasing such goods as the doctor had not been able to get at Smyrna.

On the 9th March 1812 Lady Hester Stanhope left Alexandria and proceeded to Rosetta, where two *dahabeeahs* (called by Dr. Meryon barges) were engaged to convey the party up the Nile. Captain Hope saw them on board these boats, and then returned to Alexandria. Lady Hester and her maid occupied one *dahabeeah*, and Mr. Bruce, Mr. Pearce, and Dr. Meryon went in the other; they reached Cairo on the fifth night after leaving Rosetta. Here she provided herself with splendid clothes, and as she was received in state by the Pasha, who had never before seen an Englishwoman, her arrival created a great sensation. Lady Hester wore wide trousers of purple velvet richly embroi-

dered in gold, which cost £40, yellow Turkish boots, a purple velvet waistcoat and cloak, embroidered in gold, and costing £50, a turban made of a Cashmere shawl worth £50, and an equally valuable shawl as her sash. Her sabre cost £20, her saddle £35, and various additional articles came to £100 more.[1] Mr. Bruce was equally magnificent, but Dr. Meryon was content with "the common costume of a gentleman or Effendi," with a yatagan stuck in his girdle. The Pasha of Cairo sent five richly caparisoned horses to convey the party to his palace, and Lady Hester Stanhope, preceded by officials carrying silver sticks, was allowed to dismount at the inner gate used only by the Pasha himself. The Pasha received her with all honours in a painted and gilded kiosk erected in the garden of his harem; he invited her to sit on a scarlet velvet divan embroidered with gold, and offered her first sherbet served in cut-glass cups, and then coffee in china cups held in golden stands set with jewels. He also offered a pipe, but this Lady Hester declined as she had not as yet learnt to smoke. The

[1] *Memoirs*, i. 157.

visit lasted half an hour, the conversation being carried on through a French interpreter who, according to Dr. Meryon, "to a great fidelity of interpretation added an amiability that seemed to embellish the phrases he had to repeat." A day or two later the Pasha, wishing to do honour to his guest, reviewed his troops before her, and presented her with two Arab chargers. One of these she sent to the Duke of York, and the other to Viscount Ebrington, afterwards second Earl Fortescue.

Lady Hester Stanhope made an expedition to the Pyramids, which was then a formidable and even a dangerous undertaking, on account of the bands of robbers which scoured that part of Egypt. She required not only the horses, camels, asses, provisions, and tents of to-day, but a guard of French Mameluke soldiers with their Captain. On this excursion Lady Hester was accompanied by Mr. Henry Wynn of Wynnstay, who had just crossed the Desert from Gaza. The gentlemen ascended the Great Pyramid, and Dr. Meryon actually speaks with pride of their having carved their names over the entrance whilst Lady Hester

awaited their return under a tent. Mr. Wynn wrote to his father in April 1812 that she had attempted to go into the Pyramid, "but the undertaking was too great even for her, who is superior in exertion to any woman I ever saw."

As Lady Hester and the rest were being ferried across the Nile and had just reached mid-stream, where the current is strongest, a plank gave way in the bottom of the boat and the water rushed in. The single boatman, who was too old to row five people across such a river, was terrified and dropped his oars; the boat was about to sink, when Mr. Wynn's dragoman thrust his turban into the leak, at the same time shaking his fist in the boatman's face and threatening to kill him if he did not pull with all his might. The party just managed to land in safety, but the boat sank the moment the dragoman pulled his turban out of the hole.

CHAPTER V

PALESTINE

In May 1812 Lady Hester Stanhope, once more on board a *polacca*, sailed from Damietta for Palestine. The weather was now very warm, and Dr. Meryon says that "the fleas, musquitoes, and flies rendered any stay at Damietta insupportable." The party consisted of Lady Hester and Mrs. Fry, Mr. Bruce, Mr. Pearce, Dr. Meryon, a cook, two Cypriot servants of Lady Hester's, the doctor's servant, and a tent-pitcher.

Jaffa was safely reached in five days, and now Lady Hester was at last in Palestine, two years and three months after she had left England. Jerusalem had always been her goal; for, many years before her departure, a fortune-teller in London, named Brothers, had assured her that she was destined to make a pilgrimage to Palestine, to ride into Jerusalem,

then to pass seven years in the Desert, and finally to be crowned Queen of the Jews and to lead the Chosen People whithersoever she would. In this prediction she fully believed.

The party waited at Jaffa until all arrangements were completed for their ride to Jerusalem. Eleven camels and thirteen horses were hired for the party, and two soldiers, sent at Lady Hester's request by the Governor of Jaffa, acted as escort. She now chose to wear the travelling dress of a Mameluke, and, as she rode astride, Dr. Meryon says she was generally mistaken "for some young Bey with his mustachios not yet grown."[1] She felt no awkwardness in wearing this dress, and the fairness of her complexion was sometimes mistaken for paint. She wore a satin vest reaching to the hips, with long sleeves, and fastened by a button at the throat and waist; over this she had a red cloth jacket trimmed with gold lace, and made with short sleeves. Her red cloth trousers were gorgeously embroidered with gold, and they were so large and loose that Dr. Meryon thought that "by their numerous folds they

[1] *Travels*, i. 193.

formed a very beautiful drapery." "Over the whole," he says, "Lady Hester wore, when on horseback, the Arab *burnooz* or hooded white cloak, its pendant tassels and silky look giving great elegance to her figure." Lady Hester's turban was a Cashmere shawl, put on very full in Mameluke fashion, and was very becoming to her. She rode with two men walking at her horse's head; and her Egyptian saddle and bridle were of crimson velvet embroidered with gold.

In this fashion Lady Hester Stanhope rode in great state out of Jaffa, and was received at her first halting-place by an Arab Sheik who was so much feared by the Egyptian Pashas that he was said to hold the keys of Jerusalem. This chieftain, Abu Ghosh, had heard of Lady Hester, and was most courteous. He killed a sheep for her use, provided corn for her horses, and sent her a special supper cooked in four separate portions by his four wives. The first wife sent a dish of meat finely minced and rolled in vine leaves; the second, a pile of vegetable-marrows stuffed with meat and rice; the third, four boiled fowls hidden in an immense dish of rice; and

the chief wife provided a lamb roasted whole. The Sheik offered to provide tents for Lady Hester, but she preferred her own. She had just purchased six green marquees ornamented with painted flowers, and these tents were carried by day on special mules and erected for her use every night.

Lady Hester Stanhope's visit to Jerusalem must have been a bitter disappointment to her. No special notice was taken of her; she was lodged in the house generally occupied by ordinary travellers; and she made her stay very short. Perhaps she decided that the time had not yet come for the prophecy of the London fortune-teller to be fulfilled. But at Jerusalem she met a man whose very existence has often been denied. This was Emin Bey, the sole survivor of the Mamelukes who were massacred in the Citadel at Cairo by Mehemet Ali in March 1811. She helped him with money, begged Dr. Meryon to prescribe for him, and wrote to Mr. Canning on his behalf.

Lady Hester left Jerusalem on the 30th May 1812, and proceeded slowly through Galilee to Nazareth. Mr. Bruce, who was still tra-

velling with her, one night heard his servants driving away a meanly dressed Arab who had desired to see him, and went out of his tent to ask the man what he wanted. To his surprise the Arab addressed him in excellent English, and turned out to be the celebrated Swiss traveller Burckhardt. He was dressed as a Syrian peasant, wearing a long coarse shirt, the pointed sleeves of which reached far beyond the ends of his fingers, a tunic of coarse cotton, a turban of the same material, loose drawers, a striped Arab cloak, and old shoes. His legs were bare and brown, but his robust athletic frame and bright blue eyes showed at once that he was no Arab. He was known as the Sheik Ibrahim, and stayed for a few days in Lady Hester's camp, but she took a dislike to him.[1] When he took leave, Burckhardt was about to make his way to the then unexplored wilderness beyond the Dead Sea, a hazardous journey which he safely accomplished. He died at Cairo in 1817.

The unfortunate maid Mrs. Fry was now compelled to dress in man's clothes, but partly from what Dr. Meryon calls "her

[1] *Travels*, i. 271, 299.

timidity in this new garb," and partly because she persisted in sitting on her ass "in the decorous posture customary with women in England," she continually fell off her steed and was terribly bruised on the stony Syrian roads. However, Acre was reached on the 13th July, and Sayda, or Sidon, a few days later. Here the *Salsette* frigate came into the harbour, and both Lady Hester and Dr. Meryon rejoiced to see their friend Captain Hope once more.

At Sidon Lady Hester Stanhope received an invitation from the Emir Beshŷr, Chief of the Druzes and Prince of the Lebanon Mountain, to visit him in one of his large villages among the hills, Dayr-el-Kamar. The Druze country was unexplored by Europeans, and Lady Hester longed to see something of its strange and mysterious people. She gladly accepted the invitation, and the Emir sent an escort of soldiers for her, with twelve camels, twenty-five mules, and four horses.

On the 29th July Lady Hester, Mr. Bruce, and Dr. Meryon began the long ride of two days over stony, steep, and rugged paths to the Druze villages on Mount Lebanon. On the way they passed through the village of

Djoun, near which Lady Hester spent the last twenty years of her life, and to which place she now took a great fancy. On reaching the Emir's village she was accommodated in one of his palaces (recently vacated by the former owner, whom he had strangled), and here she remained for a month. The Emir's own palace stood on very high ground, and was celebrated for the streams of running water which flowed through every room to give coolness to the air.

All the Druze women wore the strange head-dress which was called their horn, and is now no longer seen. This was made of silver or tinned copper among the richer women; among the very poor it was of pasteboard: it rose from the forehead to a considerable height, and was fastened by one handkerchief passed under the chin and another round the head; a veil of white linen or of black silk hung from the top, and could be drawn across the wearer's face. The horn was worn day and night, and was only removed for an occasional combing of the hair. The dress of the Druze women is a blue gown, embroidered trousers, and yellow shoes.

Lady Hester Stanhope was much pleased with her stay in the Druze country; she studied the customs of the people, and determined to ascertain if they, according to report, ate raw meat. In a letter to England written September 30th, 1812, Lady Hester says[1]:

"I must now speak to you of the Druzes, that extraordinary and mysterious people that inhabit Mount Lebanon. I will now only mention one fact which I can state as positive, having been an eye-witness to it: it is that they do eat raw meat. I purchased of a Druze an immense sheep, the tail weighing eleven pounds; and desired it to be taken to a village, where I ordered the people to assemble and eat. When I arrived the sheep was alive; the moment it was killed it was skinned, then brought in raw upon a sort of dish made of matting, and in less than half an hour it was all devoured. The women eat of it as well as the men. The pieces of raw fat they swallowed were really frightful. . . . The two days I spent with the Prince of the Mountain I enjoyed very much. Nothing ever equalled

[1] *Travels*, ii. 13.

the honours paid me by these men. The Prince is a mild amiable man, but the Governor, the Sheik Beshŷr, has proved a Lucifer, and I am the first traveller he has ever allowed to walk over his palace, which has been the scene of several massacres. You will be surprised at it when I tell you that he judged it necessary to make one of his chief officers taste out of my cup before I drank, for fear of poison. I am used to that, yet this man upon his knees before me looked more solemn than usual."

Lady Hester Stanhope remained in the Lebanon whilst Dr. Meryon went to engage a house for her at Damascus. She announced her coming to Sayd Suleiman, the Pasha, and in a courteous reply, sent by one of his pages, he informed her that, as Damascus was one of the most fanatical towns anywhere, it would be necessary for her to wear a veil. The idea of any control over her actions always roused Lady Hester's opposition. To the terror of those with her, she declared that she would ride into Damascus unveiled and in broad daylight, and this she did on the 1st September 1812. Fortunately the crowds in the streets

were so much astonished when Lady Hester appeared, at the head of fifteen or eighteen horsemen and as many loaded mules, that they were silent, and before they had time to recover themselves she had passed on.[1]

[1] *Travels*, i. 367.

CHAPTER VI

DAMASCUS AND PALMYRA

When once Lady Hester Stanhope had settled in her house at Damascus she was treated with the greatest respect. Crowds assembled to see her start for her rides, fresh crowds awaited her return ; coffee was strewed on the road before her horse to do her honour, people even rose to their feet as she passed through the bazaar ; and she was saluted as *Melekí*, or Queen, at a time when every native Christian in the city had to conceal himself as much as possible, for fear of having his bones broken by some zealous Turk. Nor was any Christian allowed to mount a horse. Yet, on the first day of the great feast Ramazan, the Governor of Damascus invited Lady Hester to visit him, and sent her a present of two Arab horses. She immediately mounted one of them, and rode to his house

through crowded streets, all illuminated for the occasion. She passed up the stairs between rows of guards and through several rooms lined with soldiers, all of whom received her in silence. When she was ushered into the presence of the Pasha, his French dragoman, who was to act as interpreter, "trembled so much that his tongue faltered when he interpreted the Pasha's first salutations. Nor was he for some time sufficiently collected to repeat with precision what was said to him."[1] Lady Hester was not in the least disconcerted, but sat down beside the Pasha when he invited her to do so by a motion of the hand, and presented him with a handsome snuff-box. He in return sent her another Arab horse. When Lady Hester returned from this visit, her janissary observed that her reception had been very grand. She replied, "Yes, but this is all vanity"; upon which the janissary said, "Lady, you carry the splendour of royalty on your forehead, with the humility of a dervish in your heart."[2]

Lady Hester Stanhope did not fancy the house which Dr. Meryon had engaged for

[1] *Travels*, ii. 12. [2] *Ibid.*

her in the Christian quarter of Damascus, and removed, not without opposition, to a larger residence in the best part of the city; nor was she pleased with the exorbitant bill sent in by the owner of the house first taken, one item of which was "For a tumbler of lemonade for the Queen on her arrival, fifteen piastres" (one piastre being worth about four shillings). The second house had six good rooms, the entrance being by a narrow passage which opened into a large courtyard paved with tessellated marble. In the centre was a fountain shaped like two brazen serpents, which was always supplied with fresh water splashing into a marble basin, and it was shaded by two lofty lemon trees. At one end of the courtyard was a large saloon paved with marble, a small room being on either side. From this courtyard a double staircase led up to a balcony, and here were Lady Hester's own rooms, one of which was a large sitting-room. Outside the main entrance to the house, and placed in the street, was a horse-block, on which Lady Hester would stand smiling at the crowds which collected to see her mount her horse.

Dr. Meryon made himself very popular in Damascus by his medical skill. One of his first patients was the only son of the Pasha. The anxious father declared that every remedy known to Eastern science had been tried in vain before he had determined on consulting a Western doctor: the boy had been sewed up in a sheep-skin fresh from the carcase of a purposely killed sheep; he had swallowed pills made of powdered mother-o'-pearl; he had lived for six days on nothing but goats' flesh; he had had the skins of pigeons applied hot to the soles of his feet,—yet all had been in vain. Dr. Meryon stipulated that he was to have a free hand in the treatment, and was fortunate enough to cure the boy, who was suffering from the effects of intermittent fever.[1]

Lady Hester Stanhope had not long been at Damascus before she began to think of a visit to the ruins of Palmyra. She was assured that this expedition was impracticable for her, partly from the danger to be apprehended from the Bedouin Arabs, who, not being under the authority of the Pasha of Damascus,

[1] *Travels*, ii. 23.

would be likely to make her a prisoner and to demand an enormous sum as ransom; and partly because the expedition would involve crossing twenty leagues of waterless desert. She was told that of the three Englishmen who had succeeded in reaching Palmyra, one, though disguised as a pedlar, had been robbed of everything but his shirt; another had been kept prisoner by the Arabs for several weeks; and the third had only accomplished the journey by making it in the depth of winter, when the Arabs kept to their tents and the shallow pools were filled by the heavy rains.

Lady Hester, however, was quite undaunted by these warnings, and although she had to put off her journey, she accomplished it at last. She wrote to England:

"In a few days I set off for Palmyra, dressed as the son of an Arab chief, with my abba [the Arab cloak], leather belt, and horsehair cord round my head; mounted on an Arab horse the Pasha has given me. With these people I am quite at my ease; I have some very good friends among them, and I have no doubt I shall do very well. The son of

a chief offered me the other day his own fine horse; but how could I accept all that a man had of valuable in the world? I thanked him and said I would give his tent the preference to any other, as I felt great confidence in him. . . . I go with a chief who plays into the hands of both tribes, and I shall be friends with all till I see which I like best, and then I shall declare myself for that tribe. I am quite delighted with these people, and I seem to take their fancy."

Dr. Meryon was sent in advance to prepare for Lady Hester's accommodation at Palmyra, and a terrible journey he had. On his way there he was caught by a Bedouin chief, and kept prisoner for eleven days; when he reached the ruins he had to share a mud hut with a family of Arabs, two camels, and a donkey; and on his return he nearly perished in the snow. He had been absent twenty-eight days, during fifteen of which he never washed his hands and never took off his clothes; he slept in a tent open on one side to the snow, rain, and wind, so that he often awoke wet through, and his food consisted of unleavened bread, dried figs, raisins, treacle,

and rice.[1] For this experience he had to pay the Arabs ten pounds.

On the 19th March 1813 Lady Hester Stanhope wrote again in high spirits: "To-morrow I mount my horse with seventy Arabs, and am off to Palmyra at last!" The Arab chief who called himself the King of the Desert provided an escort, for which she agreed to pay 3,000 piastres, or about £150, one-third to be given to him at once, and the remainder on her return.

Lady Hester's caravan excited much interest at Damascus, and when she set out for Palmyra on the 20th of March crowds filled the streets to see her pass. She was accompanied by poor Mrs. Fry (only just recovered from a dangerous attack of pleurisy, and very uncomfortable in a Bedouin dress), Mr. Bruce, Dr. Meryon, and an army of tent-pitchers, cooks, and Arab grooms. Twenty-two camels carried the baggage, which included tents, firewood, rice, flour, coffee, sugar, tobacco, saucepans, spare horse-shoes, and tools; nine others carried corn for the horses, and eight more camels were laden with water-skins.

[1] *Travels*, ii. 163.

This cavalcade was escorted by nearly a whole tribe of Bedouins, under the command of a son of the King of the Desert.

Lady Hester thus described her own dress in a letter to England:

"I will begin by the head. A square handkerchief made of coarse cotton and silk, folded from corner to corner and put on over a red skull-cap, one corner behind and one on each side; round the head, to bind this handkerchief on, are several rows of thick cord as big as two fingers, made of horse hair or camel hair, put round three or four times. A shirt, a pair of large drawers, and a sort of jacket of the coarsest materials, sometimes cotton (white), sometimes silk (red), fastened with a leather belt. Over the jacket a pelisse of curly white sheep-skin, the inner leather dressed white, or orange colour, or copper colour. Over the pelisse a kind of immense cloak with arm-holes, called an *abba*, made of a sort of carpeting of two different colours, one sort with stripes six inches wide of black and white; the other all white, with gold on the right shoulder. This last is the kind worn by the sons of great chiefs, and is the kind which I wear. Then a large pair of yellow boots, and a lance twelve feet long, decorated

with black feathers. Oh! I forgot to tell you that all the gentlemen have long beards. The Doctor is such a Quiz, you can have no idea of him! His head shaved, and a pigtail coming from the crown a yard long; a copper-coloured sheep-skin, and a pipe six feet long never out of his mouth. . . . As for our servants you would die of laughing to see them. And they are so armed! They have, one a blunderbuss, another a gun, another a large knife, and each has a pair of pistols. The cook cooks away with his pistols on. It is all vastly amusing indeed. I shall hate to see quiet unarmed people, I am sure, for the rest of my life. . . . I like my wandering life of all things, and thank God, my health is pretty good."

Dr. Meryon adds that each of the party carried a leathern water-bottle, a small pair of saddle-bags with provisions, and a few coins carefully secreted. He says that he himself felt it necessary to make a total alteration in his dress, and he therefore purchased two very coarse cotton shirts with long sleeves tapering to a point, cotton breeches, worsted socks, "uncouth red boots," two tanned sheep-skin pelisses (one long and one short), and a

red skull-cap, to be covered with a silk handkerchief, green and orange-coloured, called a *keffiyah*, the corners of which, drawn across the lower part of the face, leave only the eyes visible. A second-hand *abba*, or cloak, striped blue and white, was the ragged covering of the whole, and the cost was two pounds.[1]

Dr. Meryon was much struck with the appearance of Lady Hester's body-guard of Bedouins as they followed her:

"Their long lances, plumed with ostrich feathers; their curling hair hanging in ringlets over their cheeks and neck; their gaily coloured *keffiyahs* drawn over their mouths like vizors; their lean mares;—everything about them was novel, and calculated to set fancy to work as to where we were going and what would be the issue of this journey. As we entered the Desert, those who had not before seen so vast a waste looked as people may be observed to do when embarking on the sea for the first time in their lives, and losing sight of land."

Lady Hester was perfectly aware of the

[1] *Travels*, ii. 90, 183.

danger of this expedition. She wrote on September 30th, "Everybody is surprised at my courage," and again on October 12th: "These men stick at nothing. But luckily for me, I am well known to some thousands who have been in the habit of seeing me with their Chief visiting their horses. I have less to fear than any one else." "The difficulty of the enterprise," she wrote later, "was that the King of the Desert was at war with some very powerful Arabs, and it was from *them* that we were in dread of being surprised, particularly as it was known that they had said that they could sell me for 25,000 piastres, or three hundred purses, which they certainly thought they could get for my ransom at home."

The first encampment was in the Desert, the next on the banks of the River Orontes. Here Lady Hester occupied an Arab hut, but Mrs. Fry saw so many rats in it "that she was exceedingly terrified, and sat in the open air during the greater part of the night."[1] On the second day several Sheiks visited Lady Hester Stanhope, and she stationed a

[1] *Travels*, ii. 185, 186.

tall black slave at the door of her tent, "whose scowling looks and tremendous battle-axe," says Dr. Meryon, "almost excited terror in those whom he was destined to protect."

On the way to Palmyra the party met a whole tribe of Arabs, who were moving in search of fresh pasture. The Arabs descended by a mountain pass from the Belàz range, perhaps two thousand in number, with a thousand camels, the young unladen beasts following their masters like dogs. Lady Hester wrote that these Arabs "travelled with all their fine mares, little colts, little camels, little children, and hideous women with the most extraordinary head-dresses and extraordinary rings at their noses, all preposterously tattooed in flowers and frightful figures."

On the eighth day of the journey Lady Hester Stanhope approached Palmyra, crossing a barren and stony plain, which Dr. Meryon says was "frightful, with only one solitary tree, the stems of a few bulbous plants being the only other objects upon it."[1]

[1] *Memoirs*, ii. 122

Palmyra was reached on the 29th March 1813. Dr. Meryon writes:

"The inhabitants had resolved on welcoming Lady Hester in the best manner they could, and had gone out in a body to meet her. There might be altogether fifty men on foot, who, naked to the waist and only covered by a sort of antique petticoat, ran by the side of the horsemen, who galloped in all directions with rude kettledrums beating and colours flying. The tanned skins of the men on foot formed a curious contrast with the cowry shells and the blackamoors' teeth which were studded on their shoulder belts, to which are suspended their powder-flasks and cartouche-boxes. These Palmyrenes carry matchlock guns slung across their backs, and are very skilful in the use of them. They are huntsmen by profession and often engage in petty warfare with the Bedouins for the protection of their caravans."[1]

Lady Hester herself wrote:

"I wish you could all breathe the air of the Desert. Even the horses sniff as if taking snuff; it is so pure they quite live on it, for they have little else to nourish them. The

[1] *Memoirs*, ii. 196.

Arabs are enchanted with my horsemanship, which is lucky for me; they, as well as the Turks, think people who cannot ride *absolute fools.*"

She wrote after her arrival at Palmyra:

"You must not understand Palmyra to be a desolate place, but one in which there are fifteen hundred inhabitants. The Chief and about three hundred of his people came out about two hours' distance to meet us. He and a few of the grandees were upon Arab mares, and dressed rather more to imitate Turks than Arabs, with silk shawls and large silk turbans. The men, at least many of them, had their whole bodies naked except for a *pestimal,* or petticoat, ornamented and studded with leather, blackamoors' teeth, beads, and the strange sorts of things you see on the stage. They were armed with matchlocks and guns, all surrounding me and firing in my face, with most dreadful shouts and savage music and dancing. They played all sorts of antics till we arrived at the Triumphal Arch at Palmyra. The inhabitants were arranged in the most picturesque manner on the different columns leading to the Temple of the Sun. The space before the Arch was

occupied by dancing girls, most fancifully and elegantly dressed, and beautiful children were placed upon the projecting parts of the pillars, with garlands of flowers. One, suspended over the Arch, held a wreath over my head. After having stopped a few minutes, the procession continued and the dancing girls immediately surrounded me. Then the lancemen took the lead, followed by poets from the banks of the Euphrates singing complimentary odes, and playing upon various Arabian instruments."

To this account Dr. Meryon adds that before reaching the Triumphal Arch the party advanced by way of a colonnade four thousand feet in length, upon each pillar of which was a projecting pedestal, formerly occupied by a statue, of which no trace remained but the cramping-irons for the feet. Upon these pedestals there now stood beautiful young girls holding garlands, and as Lady Hester Stanhope passed they leapt to the ground, joined in a dance by her side, and accompanied her to the Triumphal Arch, where "some bearded elders chanted verses in her praise, and all the spectators joined in chorus."[1]

[1] *Memoirs*, ii. 197.

Dr. Meryon had prepared a residence for Lady Hester by clearing out and sweeping three Arab huts, called by him cottages, which had been built against the pillars of the Temple of the Sun at Palmyra. He says: "The cottages were very rudely constructed of unshapen stones cemented by mud; the floors were of yellow clay and the walls within of the same. A flight of steps went up to the first storey, where was an airy room that looked over the ruins, and this I set apart for Lady Hester's chamber."

Perhaps Lady Hester thought of another Queen of the East as she rode in state into Palmyra. For here, in the city founded by Solomon and colonized by Trajan, Zenobia had reigned over that green oasis amid the Syrian desert. Zenobia, like Lady Hester, imagined herself to be independent of all authority, even of that of Rome itself; she embellished Palmyra with splendid buildings, she extended her power on all sides, and from A.D. 273 to A.D. 266 she reigned there in the greatest magnificence. Longinus, the Greek philosopher, was her chief counsellor and her instructor in literature. Longinus was

known as "the living library, the walking museum," but neither he nor Zenobia foresaw the end of that brilliant period. The Roman Emperor Aurelian marched into Syria, overcame the army of Zenobia, and forced her city to surrender. The Queen of the East was carried prisoner to Rome, and led in the Emperor's triumphal procession, wearing fetters of gold. Longinus was put to death, and the marble columns standing on the solitary oasis in the Desert are all that is left of Palmyra.

Lady Hester Stanhope cared little for the charm of landscape or for architectural beauty, but Palmyra has been well described by another Englishwoman, one of the very few persons who have reached Palmyra. Miss Emily Beaufort, afterwards Viscountess Strangford, wrote in 1861 of her visit to the ruins:[1]

"First, though furthest off, the Temple of the Sun rose up high in giant massiveness. Then, as we advanced another step, the splendid Colonnade, with the Triumphal Arch, its noble gateway. One building succeeded

[1] *Egyptian Temples and Syrian Shrines*, chap. xx.

another, each and all dazzlingly white save where touched with shining gold or rosy pink. How absolutely interminable it seemed, as column succeeded to column in endless succession up to the very mountain foot, meeting other colonnades which branched off at right angles, and then faded down in ruins,—lone columns standing up here and there, and those of the Amphitheatre curving round in a broken semicircle, amidst the miles and miles of scattered stones, broken pillars, fallen pediments, and huge blocks, which covered the whole ground. A few dark masses stood out from among the light columns: these were the platforms of smaller temples and halls,—and one of them, the palace of poor Zenobia. All around lay the Desert in its apparently boundless infinitude."

A report had been spread among the Arabs that Lady Hester Stanhope had come to Palmyra in search of treasure. This might have had serious consequences, but she got over the danger by requesting the Sheik whose tribe was encamped there to accompany her when she examined the ruins. Lady Hester was on horseback, the Sheik on foot, and she led him such a round that he, being

quite unaccustomed to walking, was at length fain to sit down, saying that he could not take another step. The danger, however, was really serious, and Lady Hester determined to leave Palmyra suddenly. Unfortunately Dr. Meryon found time for "her name to be cut out in a conspicuous place, as a memorial of her visit to future travellers."

Lady Hester Stanhope left Palmyra very early in the morning, on the 4th of April. It was her custom every evening, as soon as the bustle of encamping was over, to go to the tent set apart for meals, and to summon the Emir Nasàr, the son of the King of the Desert and chief of her escort, to converse with her. One evening Nasàr sent back word that "the lady might be the daughter of a Vizier, but that he was the son of a Prince, and was not at that moment disposed to quit his tent. If the lady wanted him, she or her interpreter might come to him." The Bedouins made it known that Nasàr was very moody; even Lady Hester felt less confidence in him, and she, Mr. Bruce, and Dr. Meryon discussed what should be done in case of treachery. Whilst they were anxiously

considering their plans, they heard a great noise and confusion in the camp, and one of the Syrian servants rushed in to say that some of the Bedouin mares had been stolen by another tribe, that enemies had been seen near the camp, and that Nasàr and his people had instantly set off in pursuit of them.

The situation was extremely critical. The whole of the Arab escort had vanished; Lady Hester and her little party were left alone in the heart of the Desert with no guide, no knowledge of their bearings, ignorant of the position of the wells on which their very existence depended, encumbered with a store of baggage most tempting to the Bedouins, and aware that those Bedouins were somewhere at hand in considerable numbers. Even Lady Hester knew not what to think. Yet, according to Mr. Bruce, "she remained as calm as if in a ball-room." Mr. Bruce and Lady Hester gave orders that each member of the party should take his musket and pistols, and they themselves stationed their little garrison at different points round the camp.[1]

[1] *Travels*, ii. 194.

In about twenty minutes Nasàr returned, saying that the enemy had fled; but it was suspected that he and his men had only hidden behind some neighbouring sandhills, in order to judge by the effect of this alarm on Lady Hester whether he should attack her camp or not. The whole affair was planned to test her courage, and to see whether she could be frightened into paying Nasàr a larger sum.

This was not the only alarm. "On the morning of the 9th of April," Dr. Meryon writes,[1] "we struck our tents, and were waiting as was our custom, each with his horse's bridle in his hand, ready to mount as soon as Lady Hester should come out of her tent, which was always the last standing. Nasàr was sitting on a knoll conversing with a Sheik of the Beni Omar tribe, the other Bedouins standing round. I thought their discussions were rather warm, but I paid no attention to them. Presently two Bedouins drew their sabres down in the valley below us, and began fighting. In an instant up rose Nasàr and the other Bedouins and leaped on their mares, they rode towards the combatants, who desisted, and a crowd collected

[1] *Travels*, ii. 203.

round Nasàr. At this moment Lady Hester came out of her tent, and Mr. Bruce and I told her what had happened. She immediately mounted her horse, as we did ours, and then she said with great presence of mind, 'Whatever happens, remain you still until attacked. If the quarrel is their own, we have no right to interfere.' The crowd now opened, Nasàr and his party came towards us, the other tribe retreated. The Sheiks who were with Nasàr formed a circle round him, with their horses' heads pointing inwards, and, striking their spears on the ground, they sang as they sat a kind of chorus, in which I could make out 'Nasàr, Nasàr, we fight for Nasàr.' The tone and quickness of their voices increased, till by the repetition of this war-cry they seemed to have worked themselves into a fury.

"At this time the Sheik with whom Nasàr had been speaking so vehemently, came riding at a gallop with his spear in its rest, his head uncovered, and his hair flying in the wind, towards Nasàr. An old Sheik rode out to meet him, with his spear on his shoulder. He stopped the other, argued with him for some time, and at last persuaded him to retire. It may be conceived what our anxiety must have been during these proceedings; for it is

impossible to say what would have become of us had these two parties come to blows. We were afterwards told that the dispute began about a thoroughbred colt which Nasàr unfairly withheld from the true owner."

After these alarms Lady Hester made the best of her way back to the neighbourhood of Damascus. She was at first twelve hours on horseback, and said in a letter to England :

"When I got off I stretched myself out upon the ground as if I had been dead,—not from fright, but from fatigue and want of water. When I drank I was well, and as cheerful as ever in a quarter of an hour. We remained thirty days with these Arabs, whose character I had an opportunity of investigating pretty thoroughly. Bruce's object was to see Palmyra ; mine, to see the Bedaweens to perfection. I like the fine arts, yet to say the truth I am much more interested in the works of God than in those of man. These savages, guided by their own wonderful abilities, and who have reduced the wants of human nature to a mere nothing, gave a most wonderful example of mental and bodily strength. Besides, the beauty of parts of the Desert in early Spring are not to be

described. Almost all the bulbous plants we rear with so much care spring up in a fortnight as if by magic, bloom amongst innumerable unknown odoriferous herbs, and fade nearly as quickly from the great heat and drying winds."

CHAPTER VII

LATAKIA

From the account of Lady Hester Stanhope's expedition given in the previous chapter it might be supposed that she was in robust health. But this was by no means the case; her health was not strong, although her wonderful courage enabled her now, as always, to endure great fatigue and to scorn severe privations. The plague had broken out again at Damascus, where it was believed to have carried off a hundred thousand people, and Lady Hester hardly knew where to go. At one time she thought of travelling in Russia; then she proposed making her way to Bussora on the Persian Gulf, and thence to India. Mr. Bruce left her and returned to England, but England was the one place to which she would not go, and in the end she decided on taking a house on the sea-coast

at Latakia (the ancient Laodicea). She wrote to Lord Sligo, full of regret at leaving her Arab mode of life:

"It would have very much amused you to see me riding like a Bedouin woman in a bird's nest made of carpeting, upon a camel, and then like a Wahabee (an Arab of the Desert), upon one of their fleet dromedaries. The Arabs are the most singular and wonderfully clever people I ever saw, but require a great deal of management, for they are more desperate and more deep than you can possibly have an idea of."

Lady Hester Stanhope left Hamah, near Damascus, on the 10th May, and travelled slowly to the coast. She was escorted by two Arab guards, who found her a troublesome charge. Dr. Meryon says that these men

"were constantly enforcing the necessity of rising early and of travelling in the cool of the morning, so as to reach betimes our evening station, and thus enable the tent-men to pitch by daylight, as their work was exceedingly difficult to do in the dark. This counsel was very good but very useless, as Lady Hester would not change her hours for anybody; it

was only on our return from Palmyra that prudence got the better of her habits." [1]

Latakia was reached on the 18th May 1813. Dr. Meryon says that all around was verdure, and melons, figs, and grapes were produced in the greatest abundance. Lady Hester took a large house, with cool vaulted rooms surrounding a large oblong court, and provided with ample stabling for her nineteen horses; and as Dr. Meryon wished to see patients, he took a separate house. Here Lady Hester remained for nearly a year, planning the arrangements for her future home in the Lebanon.

In November 1813, some months after Mr. Bruce's departure, Lady Hester Stanhope was attacked by a desperate illness, which she believed to be the plague, and there is little doubt that it was so. Dr. Meryon at the same time was confined to his bed by a fever, and Lady Hester was attended by a French doctor and an Italian surgeon belonging to Latakia. They were so much alarmed at her condition that they sent for Mr. Barker,

[1] *Travels*, ii. 240.

the British Consul at Aleppo, who was spending the summer at Latakia. He considered it to be his first duty to inform her that she was in danger, indeed that her life was despaired of, and then he induced Dr. Meryon, ill as he was, to have himself carried to her room. For twelve hours he too thought her condition hopeless, and for fifteen days he never left her day or night, not undressing during the whole of the time. Mrs. Fry was also ill of fever, and the discomforts of the house were serious. Dr. Meryon wrote:

"The weather on a sudden became windy, boisterous, and exceedingly wet, so that it was necessary to hire and borrow bed-coverings; and as the house happened not to be weather-proof, Lady Hester's chamber was often inundated, and a cope of felt was suspended beneath the ceiling to keep off the water. Nay, it will hardly be believed that in mine, I was occasionally obliged to rise two or three times in the night to shift my bed from place to place, in the ineffectual attempt to find a dry corner."[1]

[1] *Travels*, ii. 275.

Just as Lady Hester seemed to be recovering from this illness she had a severe attack of ague, and was very unwell all through December. Dr. Meryon continues:

"To add to the sufferings we had within doors, provisions were very scanty. Beef and veal were never on sale, mutton rarely, goat's-flesh we could not fancy. Live game was plentiful, but the Turks do not shoot game, and the Christians dared not carry firearms. Fresh butter was rare, and when obtained it was like melted lard and could not be used. Geese, turkeys, and ducks were only to be had by sending to Cyprus, and fowls were poor."

At last, on the 6th January 1814, Lady Hester, still too weak to stand, was lifted upon an ass, and, supported on either side, was taken to the quay at Latakia. As she had not been out of doors for seven weeks a vast crowd collected to see her, and she was much annoyed by a man who, in hopes of getting money, danced before her all the way, playing upon a squeaking pipe. Lady Hester was put on board a roomy vessel with a lateen sail, and after a voyage of five days she

reached Sidon just in time to escape a storm. Indeed the swell caused the little vessel to roll very much even in Sidon harbour, and Dr. Meryon says that "Lady Hester, before we could prepare the things necessary for her landing, began to grow fearful, sickness having bent that courage which I had never yet seen yield to the commotions of the elements or to anything else."[1] At length an ass was brought to the water's edge, and Lady Hester rode to the house which had been taken for her at Sidon. Here she was detained for some weeks, for her recovery both of health and of spirits was very slow.

Lady Hester had a return of her ague at Sidon, and poor Mrs. Fry "was attacked with a most violent dysentery which threatened her life." When the doctor could leave them he made an expedition to Mar Elias, the Lebanon convent near the village of Djoun in which Lady Hester had determined to make her home.

This convent had been disused for some years, and the Patriarch of the Greek monks in the Lebanon offered it to Lady Hester

[1] *Travels*, ii. 301.

Stanhope at a rent of thirty pounds a year. It was a small stone building one storey in height, square, and with a flat roof which commanded a beautiful view. The isolation of the convent within its high white walls was complete. There was no garden, only a court in which grew a few flowers and two young orange trees. Round this court were several low rooms, and the roofs of all leaked. Dr. Meryon noticed some unpleasantness in the largest room, which had been used by the monks as a chapel; one of the walls was a good deal discoloured in the centre, and on inquiry he found that the late Patriarch had been buried in a recess in that wall, seated in his armchair. Dr. Meryon owns that at the sight of Lady Hester's future residence his thoughts turned involuntarily towards Europe.

"The situation," he wrote, "is picturesque, but lonely and barren, on the top of a mountain without verdure, surrounded on every side with mountains equally sterile, excepting a few olive and mulberry trees on a shelving bank at the back of the building. Though now on Mount Lebanon, where imagination will supply umbrageous cedars at every step,

fiction alone could throw their shade over Mar Elias. The monastery commands a most extensive view of the sea, from which it is distant in a straight line about two miles. But the sea on the Syrian coast is without shipping, and only a vast waste." [1]

However, orders were given for the needful repairs of the convent. Dr. Meryon examined a small cottage a quarter of a mile off which was to be his abode, and he then rejoined Lady Hester Stanhope at Sidon.

The hot weather of July 1814 affected Lady Hester Stanhope's health, and as Mar Elias could not yet be occupied she removed to a Druze village above Beyrout called Meshmushi. She wrote to Mr. Canning:

"I am quite at home all over the country; the common people pay me the same sort of respect as they do a great Turk, and the great men treat me as if I were one of them. In short, I am very happy in my own odd way. Part of this country is divine, and I always find something to amuse and occupy my mind. The good people of England may imagine me forlorn and miserable; they are

[1] *Travels*, ii. 310.

very welcome. I would not change my philosophical life for their empty follies."

The Emir of the Druzes made some little difficulty about allowing Lady Hester Stanhope to reside in his village, to which she replied that whether he gave her a house or not she should set off for Meshmushi the next day, and would pitch her tent on the mountain-side if she found nothing better. She set out on the 25th July, riding on her ass. Mrs. Fry was left behind at the convent, and a Syrian girl was engaged to wait on Lady Hester. Four days were allowed for the journey, and the heat was so great that Dr. Meryon preferred sleeping under a fig-tree on a carpet to occupying his tent. Meshmushi stood very high, and though in the evenings there was a good deal of chilly fog Lady Hester spent ten weeks there, and told the doctor she had never been more comfortable since she left Malta.[1]

The mountain air so much revived Lady Hester that she began to consider an expedition to Baalbec, travelling with tents as on

[1] *Travels*, ii. 375.

her visit to Palmyra, and avoiding all villages on account of the plague. She set out on the 18th October 1814, the party consisting of herself, Dr. Meryon, a dragoman, four women servants, a black girl, and eight men-servants; all were mounted on asses, and fifteen mules carried the baggage.[1] This baggage included tents, beds, kitchen utensils, coffee, rice, burgol or malted wheat, soap, candles, oil, wine, vinegar, vermicelli and macaroni, cheese, tea and sugar, syrups for sherbet, and enough fuel for Lady Hester's own use. Cords, nails, hammers, hoes, and tent-pegs were taken, and Lady Hester had provided dumplings filled with minced mutton, also bread baked in round flat cakes.

On the road Dr. Meryon was detained by a dispute among the muleteers, and lost his way. His ass fell lame, and he was obliged to walk, much inconvenienced by his Turkish dress and the heavy pistols in his belt. The night was dark, jackals howled around him, and he was glad to come upon a Druze hut and beg a piece of cheese soaked in oil. The Druze, however, would not give him shelter,

[1] *Travels*, iii. 3.

and he lay all night on the ground listening to the jackals, and fearing that the laughing cry of the hyenas would follow. In the morning the doctor hired a fresh ass, and managed to overtake Lady Hester. He found that the dumplings (called by the Arabs *cuby*) had become so dry and hard that the servants refused to eat them, much to Lady Hester's wrath. Poor Dr. Meryon agreed with the servants in objecting to the dumplings; he says pathetically: "For I, who for the sake of example was obliged to enforce Lady Hester's order by eating the dumplings myself, never suffered more from bad food than on this occasion. The maids cried, the men grumbled and rebelled, the fatigue of keeping order among Christians, Druzes, and Mahometans was more than I had hitherto experienced, but no representations could make Lady Hester abate one tittle of her resolution." The dumplings had to be eaten, and eaten they were. "Yet," adds the doctor with a little natural surprise, "no one fell ill."[1]

There were many wandering Arabs in the

[1] *Travels*, iii. 12, 14.

neighbourhood, and neither Dr. Meryon nor the dragoman felt at ease. They patrolled the ground near the tents alternately, all night, under the full moon, and the doctor reflected that "fortunately we had to deal with a woman whose composure of mind was never ruffled by real danger, and whose sleep was never broken by the apprehension of false."

Baalbec was reached at noon on the sixth day from Meshmushi, October 24, 1814, and Lady Hester remained there for a fortnight. Her encampment was placed in a valley filled with fruit-trees, cypresses, and weeping-willows, about a mile from the great Temple. In the distance rose two of the Lebanon peaks, white with snow, the dark, wooded ranges of the lower hills spreading wide below them.

The six remaining columns of the Temple at Baalbec towered above the foliage of the surrounding gardens, and the beauty of the scene impelled the doctor to inscribe a laudatory verse respecting Lady Hester Stanhope in charcoal on the wall of the inner Temple. But when he mentioned this, Lady

Hester desired him to efface the whole before she saw it, saying that whilst she had been with Mr. Pitt she never consented either to be praised in verse or portrayed in painting. The doctor, however, preserved the verse in his diary, written in Latin as well as in English. It ran thus:

"How many names, else never to be known,
Live for a while, inscribed upon this stone!
But, Hester, *thine* oblivion shall not fear!
Fame will transmit it, though not written here!"

There was some fear that the route over the Lebanon to Tripoli might become blocked by snow, and Lady Hester was persuaded to leave Baalbec on the 8th November. That night the wind changed to the north, with showers of cold rain and sleet, and just as the tents were about to be pitched there was such a fierce storm, with heavy snow, that the muleteers threw down their loads of tents and baggage, and hid themselves among the rocks. Poor Dr. Meryon was in despair. He writes:

"In vain did I call and threaten; they heeded me not. The tent-pitchers were de-

sired to plant Lady Hester's tent and to leave the others to shift as they could, but so strong did the wind blow that as fast as they reared it, it was blown down again. The maids could keep no candle alight; even in a lantern it was extinguished; and the darkness was intense. With some difficulty Lady Hester's tent was secured, and then that for the women; and her ladyship, who had meanwhile taken shelter under a precipice, was at length comfortably placed under cover. This was one of the most distressing nights we ever passed. Neither the dragoman nor myself slept during the whole night, as on several occasions the tent-ropes flew, and it required all our authority to induce the tent-pitchers to brave the weather and repair them. Next day the muleteers reappeared as soon as it was light, confessing that they had hidden themselves for fear of being employed during the night."[1]

On November 9 Lady Hester saw "the far-famed clump of Cedars" on a hill at some distance, and she rested in another Druze village. Here the horn worn by the women was decorated with jingling gold and silver coins; they told Dr. Meryon, who eagerly

[1] *Travels*, iii. 28.

collected the coins, that the noise was made "to divert their tiresome husbands."

Lady Hester travelled slowly, spending a few days in any place that took her fancy. One of these halts was made at the Maronite monastery of Mar Antonios, or St. Anthony, where some sixty monks lived. They never received "anything of the female sex" within their gates; even their hens were kept cooped up at a distance, while the cocks might run where they would. Lady Hester was accordingly lodged in an adjoining house reserved for visitors, but she was determined to inspect the monastery, in spite of the certain manifestation of the wrath of the Saint with which she was threatened. Dr. Meryon says that he believed this threat was the cause of Lady Hester's determination to visit the monastery, as it lay out of her direct road. "She sent a message to the Superior, announcing her intention of trying the Saint's gallantry, and saying that she would, on the following day, give a dinner to him and to the Sheiks who escorted her, in a room of the monastery itself. She hinted at the authority with which she was furnished from the Sultan to

visit any place she chose, therefore any opposition to her would be opposition to him." Dr. Meryon and the dragoman were very uneasy, fearing some trick; the dragoman insisted on taking a cashmere shawl to cover the divan on which Lady Hester was to sit, as well as a carpet for her feet; and the doctor had her ass closely watched, for, he says, "the path was along the edge of a low precipice, and a bramble under the tail of the ass, or a pin in the crupper, would have been sufficient to endanger the rider's life."

"When the dinner hour arrived Lady Hester appeared, and being determined that the monks should use no subterfuge, she would not dismount until she had ridden on her *she*-ass into the very hall of the building. I verily believe (if the wiser sort did not expect it) that the servants of the monastery, as well as her ladyship's own attendants, expected to see the pavement gape beneath her feet and swallow her up. However, she visited the refectory and every place where she could put her head; but at one door there was a momentary altercation between the two parties of monks, who were for and against her entering. We then sat down to dinner, and at the expiration

of four hours Lady Hester retired. The news of her courage (as it was construed by some), and her sacrilege (as it was called by others), soon spread through the Mountain, and was long the topic of general conversation."[1]

The monks declared themselves "greatly satisfied with Lady Hester's generosity" in giving the dinner, but perhaps they were not greatly surprised to hear that the next day she had a serious fall from her ass. However, she was not much hurt, for, as Dr. Meryon points out, "two lads always walked by her, one on each side, to support her knees and back in craggy and difficult places, the ass being without a bridle, and left, with the sagacity for which that animal is known, to pick its own way."

Riding in this fashion and escorted by a guard of armed men, Lady Hester safely reached Tripoli, although Dr. Meryon says that the difficulties of the road were more than commonly great. In spite of a tremendous storm of thunder and rain the streets were lined with spectators awaiting Lady

[1] *Travels*, iii. 37.

Hester's arrival, and she rode to the empty Capuchin convent which she had hired.[1]

Great civility was shown to Lady Hester Stanhope by Mustafa Aga, the military Governor of Tripoli. This man had risen to his present position by his own ability, and so much was he feared that, as he rode through the streets surrounded by his guards, the inhabitants concealed themselves. Dr. Meryon says that "his piercing eyes, which turned in every direction, watched the looks of those he met; and woe to him whose guilt was supposed to be betrayed in his countenance—that moment was his last." Lady Hester at once visited this terrible personage, and was received by him with as much civility as he could bring himself to show to anybody; she impressed him most favourably during their conversation, and Dr. Meryon says that the Aga afterwards showed a strong disposition to serve her on all occasions.

Lady Hester Stanhope remained at Tripoli for two months, although the climate was considered to be one of the most unhealthy in Syria, an assertion borne out, Dr. Meryon

[1] *Travels*, iii. 37, 40, 43.

thought, "by the cadaverous looks of the inhabitants." Whilst Lady Hester was there her doctor was entreated to visit the treasurer of a monastery some ten leagues off, who had had a paralytic stroke. The patient had lost the use of his limbs as well as his speech, and this in spite of trying every remedy known to his attendants. As a final effort he had been sent to another monastery famed for its miraculous cures of every form of disease. The cures were all effected in the same way: the afflicted person was placed in a bed in the chapel, with an iron collar round his neck. The collar was jointed at the back, and securely locked in front. The patient was then desired to sleep, and if the cure were within the power or according to the wish of St. George (the patron saint of the monastery), the collar was found open in the morning and the disease gone. If, however, St. George either could not or would not act, the collar remained closed. The treasurer had tried this treatment several times, but always in vain, and his wife now urged him to consult Dr. Meryon. On the way, the doctor was nearly drowned in crossing a river, then he was

attacked by the furious mastiffs belonging to some Turcoman shepherds, and finally he had to spend the night seated on the ground supported by his medicine-chest, whilst the rain fell in torrents. When Dr. Meryon reached the monastery next day, he had to creep in through the lowest door he had ever seen; this had been contrived to prevent the refectory from being turned into a stable by the Turkish troops, and the convent mule had actually been taught to creep through on his knees. Dr. Meryon having refused to believe in this feat, he was allowed to witness it. He certainly did his utmost for his patient, for he says that in one busy hour he enacted the parts of physician, surgeon, and apothecary to the treasurer, whose own prescription, after the failure of the collar, had been the swallowing of locks of the hair of his favourite friends cut up small.[1]

The doctor did not wait to see the effect of his remedies, but hastened back to Tripoli, having had a letter from Lady Hester to urge his return. She started for her Lebanon convent on the 16th of January 1815, and

[1] *Travels*, iii. 52.

reached it on the 28th. Lady Hester on this journey was compelled to sleep in huts vacated by the peasants, which were emptied of all they contained and swept out for her use. Dr. Meryon says: "On these occasions the practice of the servant employed on this duty was to go into the middle of the room, bare his leg, and watch how many fleas jumped on him from the floor. Sometimes they might be seen like iron filings drawn to a magnet, actually blackening the skin."[1] One day a deep and rapid river had to be forded, and Dr. Meryon bravely crossed it seven times, in assisting Lady Hester and her maid-servants.

Lady Hester was scarcely settled at Mar Elias when she was informed that a great officer of the Sultan's household, the Zâym, had arrived from Constantinople on purpose to see her, and was now at Sidon. The appearance of such a personage was always an ill omen, and on this occasion it was reported that he had been sent to carry Lady Hester as a prisoner to Constantinople. Dr. Meryon and the dragoman were greatly

[1] *Travels*, iii. 74.

alarmed, especially when they heard that the official was far too great a man to enter a Christian's house, and that he had summoned Lady Hester to Sidon. Lady Hester, however, knew what was the errand of the Zâym, and in answer to a letter from her he mounted his horse and came to Mar Elias, where he remained as her guest, although he had never set foot inside the house of a Christian before. The doctor and the dragoman consoled themselves by fresh priming their pistols and putting them in their girdles, "determined that if they saw the bowstring dangling from under the official robe, at least no use should be made of it whilst they were present."[1]

But the Zâym's mission was peaceful. He proved to be a short man of about fifty, very much fatigued by his long journey from Constantinople, and he slowly made his way into Lady Hester's presence, moaning and whining as if in pain. To explain his mission, it must be related that some time before his arrival Lady Hester had become possessed of a manuscript, said to have been surreptitiously copied by a monk from the records of a

[1] *Travels*, iii. 85, 96.

Frank monastery in Syria, and found among his papers after his death. This document was written in Italian, and disclosed the hiding-places of vast hoards of money buried near Ascalon and Sidon. Lady Hester had mentioned the existence of this treasure to Dr. Meryon, but finding him incredulous on the subject, she dropped it. Then she submitted a statement to the Sultan through Sir Robert Liston, the British Ambassador at Constantinople, in which she mentioned the discovery, adding that the benefit would not be hers, since she never sought to appropriate the property of others. Her communication was favourably received, and the Sultan had now sent the Zâym to her with three *firmans*, or Imperial commands, desiring him to act under Lady Hester's orders, to do nothing without consulting her, and to communicate the Sultan's order to all the other Pashas in Syria. The Zâym reached Mar Elias on the 28th of January 1815, and it was settled that Lady Hester was to start a fortnight later for the scene of her excavations.

There was unfortunately no offer from the

Sultan of either money or men for the work, and although from motives of economy Lady Hester had made the expedition to Baalbec with asses instead of horses, her income was by no means sufficient for these costly excavations. However she determined to send in the bill to Sir Robert Liston, flattering herself that the English Government would pay it without hesitation. Lady Hester never seems to have considered that her excavations were not authorized by the Government at home, nor that the idea of the hidden treasure might not have been brought to the notice of the Foreign Office. She simply requested Dr. Meryon to keep a regular account of the money spent on the enterprise, adding:

"I shall then send in my bill to Government by Sir Robert Liston, when if they refuse to pay me I shall put it in the newspapers and expose them. And this I shall let them know very plainly, for I consider it my right and not a favour. If Sir A. Paget put down the cost of his servants' liveries after his Embassy to Vienna, and made Mr. Pitt pay him,

I cannot see why I should not do the same."[1]

Lady Hester's dragoman left Mar Elias to make preparations for her journey, and was so unfortunate as to be robbed of the mare he rode whilst he was asleep in a mill by her side. He wrote to tell Lady Hester of his loss, and received from her a scrap of paper with these words: "Si vous avez perdu votre jument, trouvez-la." The dragoman, who had had to make his journey partly on foot and partly on a mule, searched for the mare in vain; but the Governor of Acre presented him with a fresh horse, and he returned with this animal to Mar Elias, only to be received with a severe reprimand for his negligence. The doctor, who had also been sent away to make purchases at Damascus, was nearly lost in the snow, and had to sleep between his horse's legs in a wretched outhouse. As soon as he returned to Mar Elias Lady Hester started for Acre. She had no tents, and was compelled to sleep with Mrs. Fry in a cowhouse, which the doctor tried to make "into some-

[1] *Travels*, iii. 97, 119.

thing like a habitation, by the aid of mats and carpets."

Lady Hester Stanhope reached Acre safely, and remained there till the 17th March 1815, making preparations for her further journey to Ascalon. In compliance with orders from Constantinople, she was treated with the honours usually paid only to princes, and in addition to her own six tents she was supplied with twenty others. One of these tents had been used by Caroline Princess of Wales on her journey to Jerusalem, and was, Dr. Meryon says, "of vast magnitude." The tent was double, "like the calyx and corolla of a flower, the same post supporting both, and when the tent was planted the distance between the two at the bottom was about twelve feet. It was of a green colour on the outside, studded with yellow flowers and stars. In the centre of the inner tent was placed a sofa, behind which, and bisecting the tent, was suspended a curtain made of broad bands of satin of the most vivid colours. Nothing could be more showy or more elegant." [1]

Twenty-two tent-pitchers were in attend-

[1] *Travels*, iii. 127.

ance, and a special servant carried Lady Hester's night-torch. This was a tub fixed on a long pole, filled with pieces of burning tarpaulin, and erected in front of her tent at night. Two mules carried water-skins, twelve more carried the luggage, and the tents were packed on twelve camels; the doctor and the dragoman were on horseback, and the servants rode on mules. Last of all came Lady Hester Stanhope, seated in a "palanquin" borne by a couple of mules which were changed every two hours. The "palanquin" or "tartaravan" was like a small wicker sofa, having shafts for a mule at either end; above it was an awning (Dr. Meryon calls it a tilt) of crimson cloth, open at the sides, and this awning was ornamented with six large gilded balls in front, which glittered in the sun. Lady Hester's favourite grey Arab mare was led before the palanquin, as well as her ass, in case she should wish to ride. One hundred horsemen acted as escort, three couriers went in advance to order supplies and to prepare the camps, and the Zâym himself, with a numerous escort, brought up the rear.

Unfortunately a violent gale sprang up as the party drew near the coast, and there was much difficulty in pitching the tents the first night. Some blew inside out; some fell on their occupants, imprisoning them under the heavy folds; the state torch could not be kept burning; the Zâym retired to a neighbouring monastery, and the escort fled to a village. Lady Hester had to take refuge in a small tent, and even then, in spite of all that heavy stones and strong pegs could do to keep it erect, she was twice nearly smothered by its falling upon her. Poor Dr. Meryon, anxious for her safety, "remained on foot during the whole night, exposed to the fury of the contending elements; the storm blowing up the tents like so many umbrellas."

During this confusion, a young Dalmatian appeared, wearing the uniform of a British naval officer, and bringing letters for Lady Hester Stanhope, which she read in the midst of the hurricane. Dr. Meryon did his best to provide the young man with a supper, which was no easy matter in such a storm, and he was given quarters for the night. The letters brought by this Signor Tommaso

Coschich were from Lady Hester's cousin, Admiral Sir Sidney Smith. Sir Sidney, no longer in command, was planning an expedition against the Algerine corsairs, who had long been the terror of the Mediterranean. He had, he said, the approval of the Emperors of Russia and Austria, of the King of Prussia, and of Baron de Talleyrand as acting for France, but he had no money. He was indeed so much in debt himself that he had given up everything he had in England to his creditors, "and had brought his all on eight wheels to Vienna." Now he begged Lady Hester to deliver a letter written in French to the Emir Beshŷr, and to induce him in reply to furnish fifteen hundred men for the expedition. Sir Sidney sent with the letter a variety of flags which he thought would have the effect of rallying the Emir's troops; and he begged Lady Hester to induce his Syrian friends to advance money for his expenses.[1]

But Lady Hester would have nothing to do with this wild scheme. She wrote sharply to Sir Sidney Smith, pointing out that to

[1] *Travels*, iii. 135.

employ the Emir's troops without the Sultan's permission would endanger the Emir's life, and that the question of piracy ought to be referred to the Sultan, with the hint that if he did not keep down the Algerine pirates other people would have to do his work. As to the flags sent, she asked Sir Sidney who was the King of pocket handkerchiefs? and assured him that "the Lebanon soldiers would fight very well on their own dunghill, when they had their mountain to fall back upon, but that they would never quit their firesides." In conclusion she said:

"I am much too proud to care for popularity; you are much too vain not to like it. Therefore take care how you sink that which you have gained. There is one thing that you seem to have forgotten or to be ignorant of,—that Turkey has been almost as much exhausted by the plague as Europe has been by war."

Lady Hester did not allow the matter to rest there, for she wisely sent copies of these letters to the British Ambassador at Constantinople, and to Mr. Barker, the Consul

at Aleppo, at the same time requesting Mr. Barker to stop all letters which Sir Sidney Smith might write to the Emir Beshŷr. The Dalmatian messenger was sent back with the letters, having made but a poor supper, and being unable to conceal his wrath when he found that no wine was ever served at Lady Hester's table when she was travelling with Turks.

The journey to Ascalon was continued without further incident, except that at one place a serpent coiled itself round the leg of the old woman in whose hut Lady Hester was lodged. The woman felt the snake on her leg, and calmly seizing it by the head she unwound the tail, and then killed it. The doctor was obliged to sleep among some broken walls, and complains that "ruins are very uncomfortable places to encamp in, under the most favourable circumstances, owing to the reptiles which are continually crawling about."

Lady Hester Stanhope reached Ascalon on the 1st April 1815, and she at once rode all over the ruins, seeking for the spot in which she hoped that a chest full of treasure

had been buried. She had previously asked for the aid of sailors in her excavations, and Sir Robert Liston had sent Captain Forster, of H.M. sloop *Kite*, to Sidon; but it was found impossible to land at Ascalon, and the vessel did not make any stay. Two huts inside a yard were prepared for Lady Hester's use, and Mrs. Fry was forbidden to show herself unveiled outside. Workmen were collected from the neighbouring villages, and Lady Hester sat all day long under a tent superintending them. The men, who came in parties of a hundred at a time, received no payment, but Lady Hester supplied them with two good meals every day, and Dr. Meryon says that "no severity was used towards them."

Some considerable remains of granite columns, and a quantity of fragments of marble, showed the site of an ancient building, and on the fourth day of their labours the workmen came upon a mutilated, but still beautiful, statue of colossal proportions, six feet nine inches in height, the breast ornamented with the effigy of Medusa. Dr. Meryon was delighted with the discovery,

thinking it would render Lady Hester's enterprise memorable for ever, and he had just sketched the figure when, to his horror, she said: "It is my intention to break this statue and have it thrown into the sea, precisely in order that such a report may not get abroad. If it did, I should lose all credit with the Porte for my disinterestedness." Dr. Meryon used every argument in his power to dissuade Lady Hester from such an act of vandalism, entreating her at least to leave the statue where it was, but his remonstrances were in vain. She waited for two days, and then announced her decision thus: "Malicious people may say I came to search for antiquities for my own country, and not for treasures for the Porte, so go this instant, take with you half a dozen stout fellows, and break the statue into a thousand pieces!" Dr. Meryon sorrowfully adds: "Knowing her unalterable determination in such cases, I therefore went and did as she desired."[1] Lady Hester actually wrote to Lord Bathurst,[2] then in the Government, to tell him what she had done, although she does not seem

[1] *Travels*, iii. 166, 186.

[2] 3rd Earl Bathurst.

to have been acquainted with him. She said:

"Whilst excavating a once magnificent building we found a superb colossal statue, without a head, which belonged to the heathens. Knowing how much it would be prized by English travellers, I ordered it to be broken into a thousand pieces, that malicious people might not say I came to look for statues for my countrymen, and not for treasure for the Porte."

Three spots were examined in the hope of finding the buried treasure, but all proved empty, and Lady Hester had to acknowledge her failure. She presented the Zâym with a black slave and a Cashmere shawl, in addition to the money he had been promised, and he returned to Constantinople.

Lady Hester's means had proved quite unequal to the expenses connected with her excavations, no money came from the English Government, and she was obliged to apply to Mr. Barker, the Consul at Aleppo, for a loan. She had never hitherto been in debt, and as soon as she returned to the Lebanon she dismissed all superfluous servants, and

resumed her retired mode of life. Dr. Meryon had been

"curious to observe whether the subtraction of the numerous suite, and the loss of the palanquin and other emblems of greatness, would affect Lady Hester's looks or spirits. But neither was there to be observed mortification or melancholy, and with only eight or ten attendants she rode out of the gates of Acre with as much serenity as any human countenance could put on." [1]

Soon after Lady Hester's return to Mar Elias, described by her as "a pretty convent at the foot of Lebanon," she was informed that the Pasha of Acre, who had been very civil to her, had just been blessed by the birth of a second son, his elder boy having died of the plague. She made a present to the man who brought the message, and was afterwards much annoyed to find that he was an impostor and the news false. Lady Hester instantly sent a Druze in pursuit, who inveigled the man back to Mar Elias by saying that he was to receive a new suit of clothes

[1] *Travels*, iii. 184.

in honour of the joyful event. Dr. Meryon says: [1]

"No sooner was Hassan the messenger arrived at Mar Elias than Hadji Ali, Lady Hester Stanhope's janissary, and Sulyman the Druze who had brought him back, seized him and bound him hand and foot. Hadji Ali reproached him with his lies, and he was locked up in the wood-house until the morrow. On that day, when Lady Hester came home and was alighting at her door, she saw Hassan tied to a tree with Sulyman keeping guard over him. She desired Hadji Ali and another servant to bastinado Hassan, and then went into the house. But she little thought to what lengths these men would go, for, throwing the poor wretch on his back on the ground, with his hands tied, one held up his feet whilst the other beat him most unmercifully on the soles. When at last Sulyman's strength failed him from passion, Hadji Ali seized a broomstick which lay near at hand, and struck the helpless man across the legs and thighs in a manner which I thought would have broken them.

"I had cried Enough! several times, but at length, seeing that they heeded me not, I

[1] *Travels*, iii. 272.

forcibly held their hands and with difficulty drew them off, pale, breathless, and trembling with rage. They would have renewed the beating, had I not compelled them to desist. Hassan was again tied to the tree, and afterwards thrown into the wood-house for the night. On the following morning Hadji Ali departed with a letter for Acre, driving Hassan, lame and bruised, before him. As he could not walk so great a distance, Hadji Ali was compelled to leave him lying down in the middle of the road, and he only reached Acre, limping and sore, three or four days later."

Hadji Ali was furnished with the following letter from Lady Hester to the person who had sent Hassan to her:

"A certain impostor, called Hassan, came to me in the name of the Pasha and yourself, pretending that the Pasha had been blessed with a son. Hadji Ali knew him, went in search of him, and put him in prison. He will tell you the rest himself." [1]

It will be recollected that Miss Williams was left with her married sister at Malta when Lady Hester Stanhope started for the East.

[1] *Travels*, iii. 272, 298.

She now, March 1816, ventured alone to Cyprus in the hope of rejoining Lady Hester, and owing to a long delay at Rhodes, where the vessel she was in had to refit, she did not reach Beyrout for three months and a half after leaving Malta. Lady Hester was really grateful to Miss Williams for coming to her, and sent both Dr. Meryon and Mrs. Fry to Beyrout to meet her, the doctor to act as escort, and Mrs. Fry "to instruct Miss Williams how to dress herself, how to wear a veil in travelling, and how to conduct herself in this new world."

A new world indeed it was to Miss Williams from the very first. On the way back to Mar Elias the party had supper at a village, and their Turkish servant found that although they had a supply of candles they had no candlestick. "He therefore invented a substitute: cutting off the crown of our loaf of bread, he made a hole in the crumb with his finger, and stuck the candle in. Miss Williams stared in astonishment." She joined Lady Hester in her Lebanon home, and never left her again.

Lady Hester Stanhope was now settled in

the convent, which had been repaired and arranged for her. She had with her Miss Williams and Mrs. Fry, a Syrian girl named Fatoûm, who acted as her messenger, seven black slaves (of whom five were women), and a crowd of stable-men, muleteers, gardeners, and water-carriers. There were also in the village of Djoun two Syrians, who managed her outdoor affairs. One of these was a special favourite with her because he was club-footed, for Lady Hester believed that all club-footed people were particularly clever. She said of this man:

"He serves me well, for at whatever hour of the night I ring my bell he is always on his legs. If I want to be talked to sleep he has a number of amusing stories to tell. He moves about so gently that I hardly hear him, although he is lame and hobbles on one leg. There is sure to be hot water on the fire at any hour, and he makes the girls look about them somehow or other. But he is the greatest rascal that ever walked the face of the earth."[1]

Another person who was for several years

[1] *Memoirs*, i. 82.

in Lady Hester Stanhope's service had begun life as a sponge-diver, and was well acquainted with many of the Mediterranean ports, which he had been accustomed to visit as a trader, buying at one place what he could sell at another. He had risen to be the captain of an armed vessel under Abdallah Pasha, and when the Pasha was carried off as a prisoner to Egypt Lady Hester engaged him. This man, whose name was Logmagi, became Lady Hester's purveyor, steward, and general *factotum*, one of his duties being to keep his mistress informed of all that was going on in Sidon and the neighbouring country. He was boisterous and rude, but very clever in his own way, and succeeded in flattering Lady Hester by inventing stories which he professed to have heard in the bazaars of her wonderful influence and generosity. Lady Hester often entrusted Logmagi with considerable sums, which she believed he distributed in charity, and she built a house for him and his two wives near her own. Dr. Meryon says that many people wondered that Lady Hester placed confidence in this man.

CHAPTER VIII

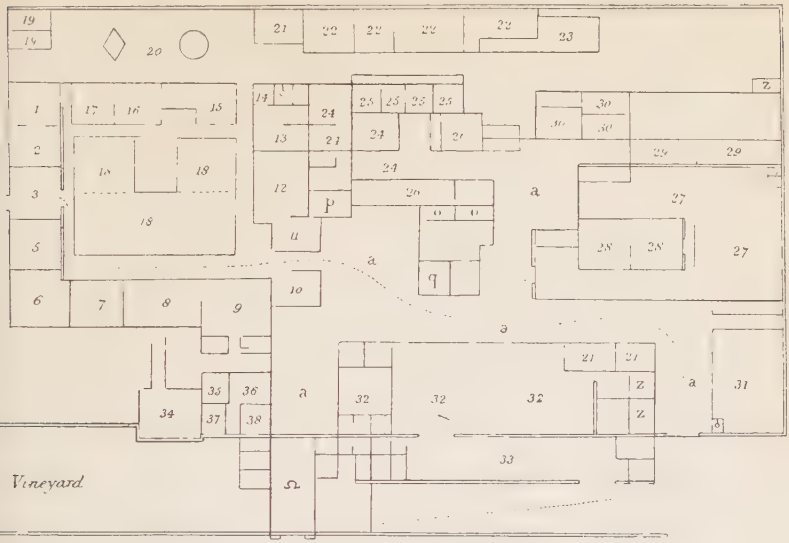
LIFE AT DJOUN

The convent of Mar Elias, in which Lady Hester Stanhope had first settled on coming to the Lebanon district, proved to be too small for her numerous establishment, and she removed to a house near the village of Djoun. This house belonged to a merchant at Damascus, who let it to Lady Hester for a thousand piastres (or £20) a year, on condition that any improvements made or buildings erected by her should revert to him and his heirs, without payment on their part. The house was called Dar Joun (*dar* meaning an elevated spot), and it stood on a low rounded hill, surrounded by gardens, orchards, and lawns. It was only one storey in height, and when added to by Lady Hester it contained more than forty small rooms, one of which was a prison. The rooms formed a

sort of labyrinth connected by dark passages, trellised walks, open-air courts, and arbours hidden in jessamine; several detached rooms were so ingeniously contrived that the wandering Syrians, whom Lady Hester wished at times to shelter, could be concealed in them for weeks at a time. The whole place was surrounded by a high wall, and within the garden were two pavilions furnished with trap-doors and underground passages which gave access to the open country. Dr. Meryon says that some of the buildings were composed of a number of walls one within the other, and owing to the different enclosures, inhabited by servants of different occupations, any person who attempted to enter the house or to escape from it was certain to be seen and almost equally certain to be stopped.[1] Everything was planned by Lady Hester herself, and built under her direction. In the course of the work she one day ordered the whole of a newly built room to be pulled down. The builder humbly begged her to explain in what way it did not suit her, for he might be able to alter it, but Lady Hester, who

[1] *Memoirs*, i. 74

GROUND PLAN OF LADY HESTER STANHOPE'S RESIDENCE AT DJOUN.



Length of the Outside Wall, 180 paces.
Breadth of the Outside Wall, 100 paces.
The dots mark the way from the Doctor's Pavilion to the inner Courts.

REFERENCE.

1.—Lady Hester Stanhope's Bed Room.
2.—Saloon, converted into a Store Room.
3.—Divan open to the air.
4.—Entrance to the Garden.
5.—Lady H. S.'s Drawing Room.
6.—Store Room.
7.—Major domo's Room.
8.—Men servants' Hall.
9.—Baroness Fériat's Room.
10.—Arbour, covered with Jessamine.
11.—Glass Room with Cistern under it.
12.—Maid servants' Room.
13.—Miss Williams's Room.
14.—China Closet.
15.—Pantry.
16.—Kitchen for Lady H. S. only.
17.—Bath.
18.—Inner Court.
19, 19.—Dairy.
20.—Back yard for Lady H. S.'s maids.
21, 21, 21.—Granaries.
22, 22.—Lulu's Stable.
23.— Best Store Room.
24, 24.—Offices and Kitchen for the Household.
25, 25.—Strangers' Rooms (second class).
26, 26.—Provision Rooms with immense Jars.
27, 27.—Strangers' Garden.
28, 28.—Strangers' Room (first class).
29.— Cow Houses.
30, 30.—Still Rooms.
31.— Servants' Garden.
32, 32.—Stables and Stable Yard for Horses.
33, 33.—Mule Yard and Stables.
34.— Terrace.
35.— Carpenter's Stores.
36.— Wine Cellars.
37.— Prison.
38.— Warehouse.
a, a, a, a.—Different Court Yards.
o, o.— Secretary's Rooms.
p, q.— Doctor's Rooms.
Ω— Doctor's Pavilion—extra muros.
z, z, z.—Porters' Lodges.

fancied that the room was charmed and that she should die if she occupied it, replied: "Your business is to pull down if I wish it, as well as to build; so be so good as to obey my orders without further question." And this she said, according to Dr. Meryon's account, "in that tone of voice which she made so terrible when she chose."

Lady Hester Stanhope took great pleasure in her garden, which she had laid out herself. There were covered walks, thickets, arbours, and trellises, all nearly hidden under a mass of roses; jessamine, honeysuckle, sweetbriar, and several English creepers grew in abundance, and in the centre of the garden she placed a marble fountain. No one was admitted into the garden but as a special favour. It was reached from the terrace outside Lady Hester's own rooms, and commanded a view over a range of low hills; in one spot a gap between the hills showed the distant Mediterranean.

At the side of the garden was the stable in which Lady Hester Stanhope kept her two favourite Arabian mares, Laila and Lulu, apart from her other horses and asses. Neither mare was ever allowed to be mounted by any

one, for in her later life Lady Hester believed that a new Messiah was about to visit the earth, and that the mares would then be used. Laila, the most prized of the two, was exceedingly hollow-backed, and was thus, as Lady Hester termed it, "born saddled," in accordance with an Eastern tradition that the new Messiah would ride upon a horse with "a natural saddle." Laila was a chestnut, Lulu a grey, and it was on Lulu that Lady Hester believed that she herself was to ride into Jerusalem one day as Queen of the Jews. Both mares were thoroughbred, and each had her special groom, who exercised her twice a day by running round a level piece of ground, holding his charge by a long rein. This spot was kept private, and when Laila and Lulu were being exercised nobody was allowed to come near, or to look at them from a distance, under the penalty of instant dismissal from Lady Hester's service. Of course this order was often evaded, but if Lady Hester found it out her anger exceeded all bounds. A specially favoured visitor was occasionally allowed to look at the mares in their stable, but not until Lady

Hester had cast his horoscope, and had satisfied herself that his star would not have a baneful influence on them. In hot weather Laila and Lulu were tethered under a vine-covered trellis upon the lawn ; their legs were washed with warm water, and the ground near them was watered to keep them cool. In the winter they remained in their stable, warmly covered up in rugs made of the softest felt.

Lady Hester Stanhope had few books, newspapers very seldom reached her, and the doctor often mourned over the loss of his library, which had perished in the shipwreck off Rhodes. The only books which Lady Hester ever looked at were a Bible, a Peerage, a volume on Domestic Cookery, a medical work, and Tissot's *Avis au Peuple*, which appears to have been another medical treatise.[1] In 1837, however, she received with much pleasure a handsomely bound copy of the Rev. J. Reynolds's translation of the *History of the Temple of Jerusalem*, which was sent to her by Sir Gore Ouseley, the President of the Oriental Translation Fund Society.

[1] *Memoirs*, i. 108.

Lady Hester had no watch or clock. She said: "I like nothing but nature. I cannot bear anything that is unnatural. The sun is for the day, the moon and stars for the night, and by them I like to measure time."

When Lady Hester settled in the Lebanon she adopted a very simple Bedouin dress. Her head was shaved, and covered by the usual red Turkish *fez*, over which she wore a cream-coloured turban. Between the turban and the *fez* she wore a silk handkerchief striped with yellow and red, which was either tied under her chin or allowed to hang loose round her face. Her long loose white *abbah*, or cloak, was looped across her chest, and covered her from head to foot. Beneath the white cloak was her crimson *jubey*, or gown, reaching to her feet, and under the *jubey* she wore a long vest, either flowered or cream-coloured, fastened round her waist by a sash made of a Cashmere shawl. She wore loose Turkish trousers of scarlet cloth, and long stockings of yellow leather which she slipped into yellow leather boots with soft soles. In winter a thick warm cloak, made with sleeves, replaced the white *abbah*, and on special occa-

From a lithograph

LADY HESTER STANHOPE.

sions the *abbah* was made of a black material, fastened with gold loops and gold tassels.

Lady Hester now never sat on a chair, but upon a small carpet on the ground, leaning on a short ebony crutch inlaid with mother-of-pearl; or else she reclined on the cushions of the divan which occupied one side of her room. She smoked fine Latakia tobacco in long Turkish pipes made of jessamine boughs, or rose boughs, or of cork-wood; and as she never used a pipe for more than two days Dr. Meryon once counted a hundred and two pipes thrown aside in a corner of her room.

For the last fifteen years of Lady Hester's life she seldom left her bed till late in the afternoon, and then sat up till five o'clock in the morning. When she went to bed she was almost as fully dressed as when she was up, for over a nightdress of silk and cotton she wore a quilted white jacket, a turban on her head, and her *keffiyah*, or handkerchief, tied under her chin, as well as a shawl over her shoulders. Her bedstead, raised at the head, was nothing but planks nailed upon low trestles, upon which was placed a mattress seven feet long and four and a half feet broad.

She had fine Barbary blankets instead of sheets, her pillow-cases were of coloured cotton or Turkish silk, and instead of a quilt or counterpane she used her woollen cloak or her fur pelisse. Her blankets were burnt into holes by the ashes from her pipe, and she had neither curtains nor mosquito-net.[1] A wooden stool served as a table, on which were a variety of articles to satisfy Lady Hester's immediate fancies or wants: such as a little strawberry preserve in a saucer, lemonade, camomile tea, cold water, ipecacuanha lozenges, a bottle of wine or of orangeade or of violet syrup, aniseeds or cloves to chew, quince jam, a cup of cold tea covered by the saucer, and a pill-box—so that it required the greatest dexterity to take up one thing without knocking over half a dozen others. An earthenware jug and a copper basin stood in one of the three windows, for there was neither washing-stand nor dressing-table. The windows had no curtains, and the felt with which one of them was covered was kept in place by a stick stuck tightly in from corner to corner, diagonally. The bell-rope was a common cord passed

[1] *Memoirs*, i. 103.

through a wooden pulley in the ceiling, and its knotted end was tied to a rusty hook in the wall close to Lady Hester's hand. One of the maids slept behind a red cotton curtain hung from a cord from which most of the curtain-rings had disappeared; and the black girl lay on a thick cushion on the floor. The floor, which was of cement, had no carpet, only an oblong strip of drab felt. In two deep niches in the wall Lady Hester piled up her scanty possessions. These comprised her few books, some bundles tied up in handkerchiefs, a white plate loaded with scissors and spectacles, another heaped with pens, sealing-wax, and wafers, a common white inkstand, and Lady Hester's blotting-book (which was the old parchment cover of some merchant's day-book in which she kept a little blotting-paper). The ground was strewed with bits of string and pieces of torn paper, and here and there were lengths of silk or coloured cotton which Lady Hester intended giving as presents. Dr. Meryon says that the room was seldom thoroughly swept out, dust and cobwebs covered the few books, and he exclaims, "Such was the chamber of Lord

Chatham's grand-daughter! Diogenes himself could not have found fault with its appointments."[1] The discomfort was increased by the large number of cats which Lady Hester kept. Dr. Meryon objected to them: he says:

"I have counted indoors as many as thirty old cats and kittens, without including those that haunted the store-rooms, the granaries, the outhouses, and gardens, and it was forbidden to molest them. Lady Hester sometimes complained that they had eaten up her dinner, and indeed neither fish, flesh, nor fowl could be left for a moment on a table or a shelf, but half a dozen cats would be gnawing it or carrying it off. This, however, was a trifling nuisance in comparison with their caterwauling during their disputes, day and night, which was at once most overpowering and most ludicrous."[2]

Dr. Meryon observes that in Lady Hester Stanhope's later years

"it was her pride to be in rags, but the rags were accompanied by an extraordinary degree of personal cleanliness. She always cherished

[1] *Memoirs*, i. 110. [2] *Ibid.* iii. 124.

a feeling of profound indignation at the neglect with which she considered herself to have been treated by her former friends, and to dress herself in rags was her way of showing it."

She would say

"Could the Sultan see me now, even in my tattered clothes, he would respect me just as much as ever. After all, what is dress? Look at my ragged cloak; it is not worth sixpence, but do you suppose that affects my value? When I think of the tawdry things for which people sigh, and the empty stuff which their ambition pursues, I heartily despise them all. There is nothing in their vainglorious career worth the trouble of aspiring after. *My* ambition is to please God. I should be what I intrinsically am were I on a dung-hill."[1]

In the spring of 1816 Lady Hester Stanhope received information that the Princess of Wales was still in the Levant and likely to land at Acre. Not wishing to come in contact with the Princess, Lady Hester determined to leave Mar Elias, but Dr. Meryon

[1] *Memoirs*, i. 86.

and Miss Williams remained behind and were desired to show her every attention. Lady Hester proceeded to Antioch, where she remained for nearly three months, and the visit of the Princess did not take place.

Lady Hester when at Antioch occupied a lonely cottage in the woods, surrounded by the Ansàry tribe of Arabs. Here she received a visit from a French Colonel of Engineers named Boutin, who had been sent by Napoleon on a mission to Syria. He had been desired to learn Arabic, to make himself acquainted with the north of the country, and afterwards to go on to Arabia. Lady Hester Stanhope warned Colonel Boutin of the extreme danger of this enterprise, especially as he meant to travel with only two Mahometan servants, but he made light of her apprehensions. Colonel Boutin started, and was heard of no more till his watch was offered for sale at Damascus, and it was then discovered that he had been robbed and murdered by the Ansàry tribe. Lady Hester appealed to the Pashas of Damascus and Tripoli, urging them to revenge Colonel Boutin's death, but they hesitated to attack so powerful a tribe. Upon their re-

fusal she induced Mustafa Aga Berber, an Arab chief, to take up the cause. He carried fire and sword into the Ansàry country, destroyed the villages of the murderers, and sent their heads as trophies to Damascus, with all that could be recovered of Colonel Boutin's property. For this action Lady Hester received the thanks of the French Government,[1] and she presented the Aga Berber with a pair of English pistols. She also took the opportunity of making a speech to his tribe, telling the Arabs that she had revenged the death of this Frenchman, although he was her country's enemy, because all just persons abhorred deeds committed in the dark against the defenceless; deeds which must always be disowned by the brave and good in every nation. The Arabs listened, and bore Lady Hester no malice.

Lady Hester Stanhope's generosity was boundless. Her delight was in helping others, and she would give away much that in her later years she could ill spare. She protected every one who appealed to her for help, she supported those who were in need, and for

[1] *Travels*, iii. 336.

some years the power and influence which she exercised in the Lebanon almost amounted to sovereignty. Even the powerful Prince of the Desert, Mohanna-el-Fadel, asked the aid of his "dear sister, the Syt (Lady) Hester," and sent one of his chiefs to wait upon her, with an Arab colt as a present. Dr. Meryon says: "It was a fine sight to behold the Bedouins come to seek the protection of a woman and a stranger." Yet Lady Hester never exceeded her powers. She was frequently appealed to by her Syrian neighbours to save their sons from conscription by taking them into her service, but she always replied that, although she knew the boys would be given to her as a present by their commandant, she would never break the laws of the country in which she lived.[1]

Lady Hester Stanhope received several European visitors during the earlier portion of her residence in the Lebanon. The first of these, who came during a tour which he was making in the Levant, was Mr. William Bankes (the Harrow friend of Lord Byron), who afterwards represented Cambridge Uni-

[1] *Memoirs*, ii. 110.

versity. He stayed with Lady Hester in 1816, and she received him with pleasure, as she had formerly known several members of his family. Mr. Bankes rode about the Lebanon with Dr. Meryon, taking many sketches, or, as such drawings were then called, "views," of the scenery; and he announced his intention of visiting the ruined temples at Palmyra. Lady Hester Stanhope, after her own visit to Palmyra, had made a bargain with the Emir ruling over that part of the Desert that any of her friends were to be allowed to pass through his territory if they carried a letter from her: if they could not produce such a letter, the Emir was to understand that they were no friends of hers. She also told the Emir that she should send two classes of friends, who would be distinguished by the seals on their letters:[1]

"If there comes to me a great man, a man on whom I can rely, and whose word you may trust as my own, a man who wants to live among you, to watch your mock fights, or to see a camel killed and eaten, or to ride on a dromedary in its housings—then I will

[1] *Memoirs*, iii. 301.

send you a letter with two seals. But if he be another sort of person, I shall send the letter with only one seal."

This arrangement was mentioned to Mr. Bankes by Lady Hester, and in giving him the packet in which her letter was enclosed, she begged him to take one of her servants with him as guide, an Arab who knew the route to Palmyra, and who was well known to the tribes in the Desert. She felt that Mr. Bankes's relatives, who were her old friends, would naturally blame her should any misfortune befall him which she could have prevented. Mr. Bankes took the letter and availed himself of the escort, but, curious to know in which class of her friends Lady Hester had placed him, he opened the packet on his way, and got the contents translated by a stranger whom he accidentally met. Finding that there was only one seal, and that he was mentioned neither as a prince nor as a great man, Mr. Bankes threw the letter contemptuously away, and determined to make his own way to Palmyra. The consequence was that he was turned back. He made a fresh start, this

time paying the Sheik of the Desert 1,100 piastres (or £45) for leave to pass through his country. On reaching the gates of Palmyra Mr. Bankes was confronted by another Sheik, who demanded further payment. On Mr. Bankes's refusal he was imprisoned, and only released when an arrangement was made that he should advance the money and reclaim it on his departure from Palmyra. This bargain was carried out, and Mr. Bankes made the best of his way to Aleppo, thankful to have escaped the fate of other travellers, of whom he heard that the Arabs had stripped them even of their clothes. In 1820 Lord Stratford de Redcliffe met Mr. Bankes in London, and notes in his diary:

"Mr. Bankes had seen Lady Hester Stanhope in Syria; she was living in a small but comfortable house at the foot of Mount Lebanon, in the full persuasion of her being one day called to the assembling of God's chosen people in the capacity of Queen of Jerusalem. This fancy, which Mr. B. represents as having taken full possession of her mind, arose (as she herself relates) from a prophecy which the famous Brothers made to her many years ago

when her superstitious curiosity led her to try his oracular skill. He then predicted, she says, that she would pass some years in the East and reign at Jerusalem. She has already exceeded the probationary term by two years." [1]

In this same year (1816) Mr. James Silk Buckingham visited Lady Hester Stanhope, arriving at two in the morning, when she was still up. She was pleased with his conversation and with his Turkish dress, and as he had been very unwell she kept him for some time to recruit. Unfortunately he kept no notes, but the visit is described by him, ten years after it took place, in his *Travels among the Arab Tribes.*

After giving an account of Lady Hester's house and garden, Mr. Silk Buckingham says:

"Nothing appeared unnecessary or expensive, but all that could conduce to comfort or that was procurable in the country was seen in clean and unostentatious simplicity. Lady Hester rose generally about eight; walked in the flower-garden, or read, till ten; breakfasted on tea and coffee in the English manner,

[1] *Life of Stratford Canning,* i. 292.

indeed so much so that there was no distinction between her breakfast-table and one in England, except that finer and fresher fruits were produced than it is usual to see in London. An extensive correspondence, which her ladyship appeared to maintain with persons of distinction in all parts of Europe and even in India, generally occupied her pen, or that of her secretary, who wrote from her dictation for several hours in the middle of the day. But with all this, a want of leisure was never pleaded in excuse for not attending to any of the applications for relief that were perpetually made, from whatever quarter they might come. A walk or a ride on horseback was generally indulged in before dinner, which was always served soon after sunset and was a happy medium between frugality and abundance, such as a prince might partake of and yet of which the most temperate could not complain. The evening was almost invariably passed in conversation; and so powerful even at this distant period is my recollection of the pleasure this afforded me, that I could use no terms which would be too extravagant in its praise. The early association with men eminent for their talents as well as their power, the habit of intense observation on all passing events, the abundant opportunities afforded by years

of travel to apply these habits to the utmost advantage—all these, added to a remarkable union of frankness and dignity, gave a peculiar charm to the conversation of this highly accomplished and amiable woman. We seldom retired before midnight."

Conversation was Lady Hester Stanhope's chief pleasure (although every conversation was apt to become a monologue on her own part), and she could go on talking for hours together. Dr. Meryon records that he himself had sat listening to her "for eight, ten, nay, twelve and thirteen hours at a time."[1] Lady Hester told the doctor that Mr. Way, a missionary, once remained listening to her from three in the afternoon of one day until dawn the next morning, and Miss Williams reported to him that an English gentleman, whose name is only given as Mr. N., "was kept by her so long in discourse that he fainted away."

"Her ladyship's readiness in exigencies may be exemplified," Dr. Meryon says, "by what occurred on that occasion. When she had rung the bell and servants had come to

[1] *Memoirs*, i. 119.

her assistance, she said very quietly that Mr. N.'s feelings of shame and grief when he heard of the state of disgrace to which England was reduced by the conduct of Ministers, had so completely overpowered him that he had fainted. But Mr. N. himself declared to Miss Williams that it was no such thing, for he had absolutely swooned away from fatigue and constraint."

Lady Hester herself was wont to say, "Thoughts come into my head as wind comes in at the window," and Dr. Meryon adds:

"Lady Hester's conversations were generally familiar and colloquial, sometimes sarcastic, sometimes rising to eloquence so noble and dignified that, like an overflowing river, it bore down all before it. Her illustrations were drawn from every sensible or abstract thing, and were always most felicitous. Her reasoning was so plain as to be comprehended and followed by the most illiterate person, at the same time that it was strictly logical and always full of strength and energy. She had read all subjects without books, and was learned without lore. The flexibility of her features, the variety of her tones, her person, her dignified manner, her mimickry, all contri-

buted to the effect of her words. She would say anything to anybody, but few people thought proper to put themselves in a passion, for she generally hit right. Nobody could despise her powers of argument, and her superiority of intellect. Her quickness of perception between right and wrong was indubitable, but, when she chose, her sophistry was no less subtle and irresistible."[1]

The only female visitor whom Lady Hester Stanhope ever received at Djoun was a lady who was born in Bagdad and had become one of the inmates of the Emir Beshŷr's harem. This Turkish lady, whose biography was given in a book called *Memoirs of a Babylonian Princess*, went to visit an aged Druse in his Lebanon home. She says:

"Reclining by the side of the venerable Druse, with crossed legs *à l'Orientale*, and smoking a *narghileh*, was a tall and splendid figure dressed in a long saffron-coloured robe with red stripes, fastened at the throat with a gold aigrette, and whose appearance, although somewhat wan, was dignified and majestic. In spite of this person being attired as a man I at once perceived that the figure belonged

[1] *Memoirs*, i. 120.

to the other sex. Her right hand grasped her pipe, in the left hand she held a long rosary of amber, the beads of which she let fall through her fingers one by one in slow succession. On my entrance the aged Druse rose to receive me, as did also the lady, whom I now perceived to be of an extraordinary stature. After the usual compliments I was invited to seat myself by their side. The lady addressed me with great courtesy and benevolence of manner in Arabic, which she spoke with great fluency."

This strangely assorted party had some conversation on magic and astrology, and Lady Hester advised the Turkish lady never to quit the peaceful solitude of her Eastern home for the strife and turmoil of Europe, as she was hoping to do.

"Soon afterwards the tall lady rose, and, bidding us farewell, she took her departure, attended by a large retinue. A spirited charger stood at the gate, champing his bit with impatience; the lady put her foot in the stirrup, and vaulting nimbly into the saddle (which she, after the Oriental fashion, bestrode like a man), started off at a rapid pace, galloping over rock and mountain in

advance of her suite with a fearlessness and address which would have done honour to a Mameluke. I was extremely curious to know the name of this eccentric lady, and put the question to my host. 'That is Lady Hester Stanhope,' said he."

After this introduction the two ladies often met, generally in the paddock assigned to the Emir Beshŷr's Arab horses.

"Here," continues the Babylonian Princess, "Lady Hester Stanhope, who was one of the boldest horsewomen I ever saw, so much so indeed as to excite the admiration of the Arabs themselves, would frequently spend hours smoking her *narghileh*, and admiring the beautiful creatures, which, to the number of fifty or more, stood grazing before her, the forelegs of each being chained to a spike driven into the ground."

In January 1817 Dr. Meryon, who had for some time felt anxious to leave Syria, finally determined to return to England, he having acted as Lady Hester's physician for seven years. He bought a practice at home and married, and his Eastern journal ceased. From

this time, therefore, until Dr. Meryon's return to Lady Hester in 1830, all that is known of her life is found in such letters and diaries of her occasional European visitors as have been preserved.

An English surgeon at first replaced Dr. Meryon, but he soon found the position irksome; Mrs. Fry had left Lady Hester to return home—and the only European left near her was the faithful Miss Williams. Miss Williams did her best to make the Arab servants work and to prevent them from stealing, and this conduct, appreciated by Lady Hester herself, was greatly resented by her household, especially by Lady Hester's special attendant, the Arab girl Fatoûm. Some years after Dr. Meryon's departure, Miss Williams fell ill with ague and intermittent fever, and Lady Hester was herself confined to her bed. Miss Williams became dangerously ill, and in the absence of a doctor Lady Hester, unable to move herself, desired Fatoûm to mix for Miss Williams the only remedy in which she had faith, namely "a black dose," or salts and senna. Accordingly Fatoûm mixed and administered something

to Miss Williams, and her death followed almost immediately. Poor Miss Williams was buried under a tamarisk tree, and when Dr. Meryon saw her grave he shed tears at the thought of her fidelity to Lady Hester, and of the attachment to her service which had induced Miss Williams to leave home and friends for the numberless privations of her Syrian existence.

One of Lady Hester Stanhope's first visitors was Captain the Hon. Charles Yorke, R.N., afterwards fourth Earl of Hardwicke. He was cruising in the Levant on board his ship, the *Alacrity*, in 1824, and wrote to ask if he might visit her from Sidon. Although Captain Yorke seems to have been doubtful of his reception, Lady Hester, who had known some of his family in her youth, was pleased to make his acquaintance, and sent one of her servants with a mule to bring him to her gate. He arrived on the 29th November, 1824, and shortly afterwards sent his father an account of his visit. Captain Yorke wrote:

"The ride, uninteresting from any circumstance but that of actually being on Mount

Lebanon, deserves no remark; the country is sterile and but little cultivated in this part. Lady Hester Stanhope's residence is on an eminence about ten miles from the sea, which it overlooks. On the other side it looks across the valley of the Bishra, and is high enough to enjoy the beautiful verdure of the mountains rising on the opposite side, whose tops are the most lofty of Libanus. The air is pure, the scenery bold. On a hill about a mile to the southward of her habitation is a village, which flourishes in the sunshine of her favour and protection. Lady Hester's house is a neat building, a mixture of Oriental and English style. From the entrance-gate a passage (on either side of which is a guard-room and some apartments for soldiers and servants), leads to a square yard, half-way across which is a terrace with three steps. Round this terrace are the different apartments of the servants and interpreters, also the spare rooms for visitors.

"On the left side of the terrace, under a lattice-work of wood, interwoven with roses and jessamine, is a small apartment furnished in the Eastern style, into which I was ushered. The chibouque and coffee were instantly brought by a French youth in the costume of a Mameluke, with compliments from Milady,

begging I would refresh myself after my fatigue. On my ablutions being finished I was sent for.

"Passing through several corridors I was shown into a rather dark room with a curtain drawn across it, which curtain being a little withdrawn I found myself in the presence of a Bedouin Arab chief, who soon turned out to be Lady Hester Stanhope.

"She expressed great joy at seeing the son of one of the most honest families in England—for so she was pleased to express herself. She received me as an English lady of fashion would have done. I at once became delighted with her wit, her knowledge, and, I must say, her beauty, for she is still one of the finest specimens of a woman I have ever seen. Her conversation was animated beyond that of any person I ever met, and she was in great spirits. Her dress, which well became her gigantic person, was very rich. I shall pass over our conversation, which was full of histories of marvels and wonders, manners and customs of the people here, pestilence and famine, etc."

The dim light noticed by Captain Yorke was what Dr. Meryon calls "a pardonable deceit," for by this means together with a

special arrangement of her turban, he says that Lady Hester "contrived to conceal the inroads that years were making in a fine and noble face." Lady Hester was forty-eight at the time of Captain Yorke's visit.

In 1825 Lady Hester Stanhope received the news of the death of her brother James. She had been deeply attached to him, and it was through him that Sir John Moore sent his dying message to her. She felt this loss greatly, and Dr. Meryon says that she sobbed aloud. "Her weeping was not woman-like: it had a wild howl that was painful to hear; Lady Hester Stanhope seemed not to be made of the stuff for tears. If Bellona could have ever wept, she must have wept in this way."[1]

From this time Lady Hester's whole mode of life was changed; she never went outside her garden-wall, nor did she ever mount a horse. Her only surviving sister, Lady Griselda Tickell, took the opportunity of writing very kindly to her, telling Lady Hester about James Stanhope's widow and child, and trying to break the long silence that had grown up between her and her own

[1] *Memoirs*, ii. 161.

family. But although Lady Griselda wrote several times, her letters were not even acknowledged, and the silence of thirty years remained unbroken.

Still Lady Hester received visitors at intervals. M. de Lamartine spent some time at Beyrout in 1832, and was allowed to visit Djoun. When he published an account of his visit,[1] Lady Hester, to whom it was read by Dr. Meryon, was ill-pleased, and declared that one half of her conversation as reported by him was untrue, and the other half invented, but his description of her house is well worth quoting.

M. de Lamartine was aware that Lady Hester Stanhope scarcely ever received visitors, but he cleverly got over the difficulty by pretending to ask her advice as to a journey which he contemplated making in Syria. His letter, which he sent by an Arab messenger, pleased her; it was written on the 20th September, 1832.

"MILADY,

"Voyageur comme vous, étranger comme vous dans l'Orient, n'y venant chercher comme vous que le spectacle de sa nature, de

[1] *Voyage en Orient*, vol. i. p. 168.

ses ruines, et des œuvres de Dieu,—je viens d'arriver en Syrie avec ma famille. Je compterais au nombre des jours les plus intéressants de mon voyage celui où j'aurais connu une femme qui est elle-même une des merveilles de cet Orient que je viens visiter.

"Si vous voulez bien me recevoir, faites-moi dire le jour qui vous conviendra, et faites-moi savoir si je dois aller seul, ou si je puis vous mener quelques-uns des amis qui m'accompagnent, et qui n'attacheraient pas moins de prix que moi-même à l'honneur de vous être présentés.

"Que cette demande, Milady, ne contraigne en rien votre politesse à m'accorder ce qui répugnerait à vos habitudes de retraite absolue. Je comprends trop bien moi-même le prix de la liberté et le charme de la solitude, pour ne pas comprendre votre refus et pour ne pas le respecter.

"Agréez, etc.,

"A. DE LAMARTINE.

"Je n'attendis pas longtemps la réponse. Le 30 septembre à trois heures de l'après-midi l'écuyer de lady Stanhope, qui est en même temps son médecin,[1] arriva chez moi

[1] This was a man named Léonardi, who posed as a doctor from having lived in Dr. Meryon's service.

avec l'ordre de m'accompagner à Djoun, résidence de cette femme extraordinaire.

"Nous partîmes à quatre heures. J'étais accompagné du docteur Léonardi, de M. de Parseval, d'un domestique et d'un guide; nous étions tous à cheval. Je traversai à une demi-heure de Beyruth un bois de sapins magnifiques, plantés originairement par l'émir Fakardin, sur un promontoire élevé, dont la vue s'étend à droite, sur la mer orageuse de Syrie, et à gauche sur la magnifique vallée de Liban. . . .

"Le lendemain à sept heures du matin par un soleil déjà dévorant . . . nous gravissons de collines crayeuses, nues, déchirées, qui, s'élevant insensiblement d'étage en étage, nous menaient à la solitude que nous cherchions vainement des yeux. Ce sont des squelettes de collines que les eaux et les vents ont rongés depuis des siècles. Ce n'est pas là que je m'attendais à trouver la demeure d'une femme qui avait visité le monde et qui avait eu tout l'univers à choisir.

"Enfin, du haut d'un de ces rochers, mes yeux tombèrent sur une vallée plus profonde, plus large, bornée de toutes parts par des montagnes plus majestueuses mais non moins stériles. Au milieu de cette vallée, comme la base d'une large tour, la montagne de

Djoun prenait naissance, et s'arrondissait en bancs de rochers circulaires qui s'amincissant en s'approchant de leurs cîmes, formaient enfin une esplanade de quelques centaines de toises de largeur, et se couronnaient d'une belle, gracieuse, et verte végétation. Un mur blanc, flanqué d'un kiosque à l'un de ses angles, entourait cette masse de verdure. C'était le séjour de lady Esther.

"Nous l'atteignîmes à midi. La maison n'est pas ce qu'on appelle ainsi en Europe: ce n'est pas même ce qu'on nomme *maison* en Orient: c'est un assemblage confus et bizarre de dix ou douze petites maisonnettes, ne contenant chacune qu'une ou deux chambres au rez-de-chaussée, sans fenêtres et séparées les unes des autres par de petites cours ou petits jardins,—assemblage tout à fait pareil à l'aspect de ces pauvres couvents qu'on rencontre en Italie ou en Espagne sur les hautes montagnes, et appartenant à des ordres mendiants.

"Selon son habitude, lady Stanhope n'était pas visible avant trois ou quatre heures après-midi. On nous conduisit chacun dans une espèce de cellule étroite, sans jour et sans meubles; on nous servit à déjeuner, et nous nous jetâmes sur un divan en attendant le réveil de l'hôtesse invisible du romantique séjour. Je dormais.

" A trois heures on vient frapper à ma porte et m'annoncer qu'Elle m'attendait. Je traversai une cour, un jardin, un kiosque à jour et à tenture de jasmin. Puis deux ou trois corridors sombres, et je fus introduit par un petit enfant nègre de six ou huit ans dans le cabinet de lady Esther.

" Une si profonde obscurité y régnait que je pus à peine distinguer les traits nobles, graves, doux, et majestueux de la figure blanche qui, en costume oriental, se leva du divan et s'avança en me tendant la main.

" Lady Esther parait avoir cinquante ans ; elle a de ces traits que les années ne peuvent altérer. La fraîcheur, la couleur, la grâce, s'en vont avec la jeunesse, mais quand la beauté est dans la forme même, dans la pureté des lignes, dans la dignité, dans la majesté, dans la pensée,—d'un visage d'homme ou de femme, la beauté change aux différentes époques de la vie, mais elle ne passe pas. Telle est celle de lady Stanhope.

" Elle avait sur la tête un turban blanc, sur le front une bandelette de laine couleur de pourpre, et retombant de chaque côté de la tête jusque sur les épaules. Un long châle de cachemire jaune, une immense robe turque de soie blanche à manches flottantes, enveloppaient toute sa personne dans les plis

simples et majestueux. On apercevait seulement dans l'ouverture que laissait cette première tunique sur sa poitrine, une seconde robe d'étoffe de Perse à mille fleurs, qui montait jusqu'au cou et s'y nouait par une agrafe de perles. Des bottines turques de maroquin jaune brodé en soie complétaient ce beau costume oriental, qu'elle portait avec la liberté et la grâce d'une personne qui n'en a pas porté d'autre depuis sa naissance."

Lady Hester Stanhope had a long conversation with M. de Lamartine, in the course of which she informed him that from the height of his instep he must be of Arab descent. She then sent him away to dine with his friends, telling him that she herself never ate except when alone, and that she had no regular hours, taking a little bread and fruit whenever she fancied it. The dinner was laid under a bower of oleanders and jessamine, near the garden gate, and M. de Lamartine had not quite finished a very hasty meal when he was again summoned to Lady Hester's presence.

This time she was smoking her long pipe with its amber mouthpiece, and a second

pipe was ordered for the visitor, the black slave who waited on Lady Hester bowing before her with his forehead on the floor and his hands raised as he received her orders. Several pipes were smoked in the course of another long conversation, fresh coffee being brought in every quarter of an hour.

At last Lady Hester rose from her divan :

"'Venez,' dit-elle, 'je vais vous conduire dans un sanctuaire où je ne laisse pénétrer aucun profane. C'est mon jardin.' Nous y descendîmes par quelques marches, et je parcourus avec elle dans un véritable enchantement un des plus beaux jardins turcs que j'aie encore vus en Orient.

" Des treilles sombres, dont les voûtes de verdure portaient, comme des milliers de lustres, les raisins étincelants de la Terre Promise : des kiosques où les arabesques sculptées s'entrelacaient aux jasmins et aux plantes grimpantes, lianes de l'Asie : des bassins où une eau, (artificielle, il est vrai,) venait d'une lieue de loin murmurer et jaillir dans les jets d'eau de marbre : des allées jalonnées de tous les arbres fruitiers de l'Angleterre, de l'Europe, de tous les beaux climats : de vertes pelouses semées d'arbustes en fleurs,

et des compartiments de marbre entourant des gerbes de fleurs nouvelles pour mes yeux. . . . Voilà ce jardin !"

Lady Hester even showed her famous Arab mares, Laila and Lulu, to M. de Lamartine, and he assured her that if only stirrups could be contrived no saddle would be needed for Laila, who had been "born saddled." Pleased with his opinion, Lady Hester permitted M. de Lamartine to introduce one of his companions, M. de Parseval, and the gentleman seems to have appreciated the honour.

"Il attendait vainement depuis le matin une faveur dont lady Hester est si avare. Elle y consentit enfin, et nous rentrâmes tous trois pour passer la soirée ou la nuit dans le petit salon que j'ai déjà dépeint. Le café et les pipes reparurent avec la profusion orientale, et le salon fut bientôt rempli d'un tel nuage de fumée que la figure de lady Stanhope ne nous apparaissait plus qu'à travers une atmosphère semblable à l'atmosphère magique des évocations. Elle causa avec la même force, la même grâce, la même abondance. . . . La nuit s'écoula ainsi. . . . Nous nous séparâmes avec un regret sincère de ma

part, avec regret obligeamment témoigné de la sienne. 'Point d'adieu,' me dit-elle. . . . 'Allez-vous reposer, et souvenez-vous que vous laissez une amie dans les solitudes du Liban.'

"Elle me tendit la main : je portai la mienne sur mon cœur à la manière des Arabes : et nous sortîmes."

Lady Hester Stanhope's opinion of M. de Lamartine was that he was affected, and that he had tried to produce a great impression on her, in which, she said, he was grievously mistaken.

"With his straight body and straight legs he pointed his toes in my face, and then turned to his dog, and kissed him and held long conversations with him. Think of his getting off his horse half a dozen times to kiss that dog, and to take him out of his bandbox to feed him, on the road from Beyrout here! The very muleteers and servants thought him a fool." [1]

In the same year, 1832, Acre, held by an English garrison, was seized by the Turks under Ibrahim Pasha. He terrified the whole of Syria, and Lady Hester's house at Djoun

[1] *Memoirs*, i. 262.

was crowded with fugitives. Ibrahim ordered Lady Hester to give them up; she flatly refused to do so, and the Pasha thought fit to threaten her with alarming consequences. Her only reply was that the Pasha must take her own life before she would give up one of the poor persons who had sought refuge under her roof. And this action of hers was the more remarkable because she believed that, by means of "common and wicked magical arts," Ibrahim's life was so safe that after a battle he loosened the folds of his shawl and shook out the bullets like dust. Sometimes Lady Hester was supporting seventy or more of these unfortunate people; she deprived herself of every comfort, and almost of every necessary, in order to assist them, and in one of her letters she said, "I went through fatigue enough to kill a boatswain. But, whatever sacrifices I may have made of money or health, I do not regret it, and I should do the same thing to-morrow if circumstances called for such exertions."

Lady Hester Stanhope's most interesting visitor from Europe was Mr. Kinglake, who rode from Beyrout to see her. An account

of this visit, but without a date, is given by him in *Eothen*:[1]

"At Beyrout I soon discovered that in all society the standing topic of interest was an Englishwoman (Lady Hester Stanhope), who lived in an old convent of the Lebanon range at the distance of about a day's journey from the town. The Lady's habit of refusing to see Europeans added the charm of mystery to a character which, even without that aid, was sufficiently distinguished to command attention.

"Many years of Lady Hester's early womanhood had been passed with Lady Chatham at Burton Pynsent, and during that inglorious period of the heroine's life her commanding character, and (as they would have called it in the language of those days) her condescending kindness towards my mother's family, had increased in them those strong feelings of respect and attachment which her rank and station alone would easily have won. You may suppose how deeply the quiet women in Somersetshire must have been interested when they slowly learned by vague and uncertain tidings that the intrepid girl who had been used to break their vicious

[1] Chapter VIII.

horses for them was reigning in sovereignty over the wandering tribes of Western Asia. I know that her name was made almost as familiar to me in my childhood as the name of Robinson Crusoe; both were associated with the spirit of adventure; but whilst the imagined life of the castaway mariner never failed to seem glaringly real, the true story of the Englishwoman ruling over Arabs always sounded to me like a fable. I never had heard (nor indeed, I believe, had the rest of the world ever heard) anything like a certain account of the heroine's adventures: all I knew was that in one of the drawers, the delight of my childhood, along with the attar of roses and fragrant wonders from Hindostan, there were letters carefully treasured, and trifling presents which I was taught to think valuable because they had come from the Queen of the Desert,—a Queen who dwelt in tents and reigned over wandering Arabs.

"The subject however died away, and from the ending of my childhood up to the period of my arrival in the Levant I had seldom even heard of the Lady Hester Stanhope. But now, wherever I went I was met by the name so familiar in sound, and yet so full of mystery from the vague fairy-tale sort of idea

which it brought to my mind. I felt that my mother would be sorry to hear that I had been within a day's ride of her early friend without offering to see her, and I therefore despatched a letter to the recluse, mentioning the maiden name of my mother (whose marriage was subsequent to Lady Hester's departure), and saying that if there existed on the part of her ladyship any wish to hear of her old Somersetshire acquaintance, I should make a point of visiting her.

"My letter was sent by a foot-messenger, who was to take an unlimited time for his journey, so that it was not, I think, until either the third or the fourth day that the answer arrived. A couple of horsemen covered with mud suddenly dashed into the little court of the *locanda* in which I was staying, bearing themselves as ostentatiously as though they were carrying a cartel from the devil to the archangel Michael. One of these (the other being his attendant) was an Italian by birth, though now completely Orientalised,[1] who lived in my lady's establishment as doctor nominally, but practically as an upper servant. He presented me with a very appropriate and kind letter of invitation.

[1] This was Logmagi.

"It happened that I was rather unwell at this time, so that I named a more distant day for my visit than I should otherwise have done; and after all I did not start at the time fixed. Whilst still remaining at Beyrout I received another letter from Lady Hester, and this shows, that whatever the eccentricities of the writer may have been, she could at least be thoughtful and courteous:

"'SIR,

'I hope I shall be disappointed in seeing you on Wednesday, for the late rains have rendered the river Damoor, if not dangerous, at least very unpleasant to pass, for a person who has been lately indisposed, for if the animal swims you would be immerged in the waters. The weather will probably change after the 21st of the moon, and then in a couple of days the roads and the river will be passable—therefore I shall expect you either Saturday or Monday. It will be a great satisfaction to me to have an opportunity of inquiring after your mother, who was a sweet lovely girl when I knew her.

'Believe me, Sir, Yours sincerely,

'HESTER LUCY STANHOPE.'

"Early one morning I started from Beyrout. I left Saide (the Sidon of ancient times) on

my right, and about an hour before sunset I began to ascend one of the many low hills of Lebanon. On the summit before me was a broad grey mass of irregular building, which from its position, as well as from the gloomy blankness of its walls, gave the idea of a neglected fortress. It had in fact been a convent of great size, and, like most of the religious houses in this part of the world, had been made strong enough for opposing inert resistance to any mere casual band of assailants who might be unprovided with regular means of attack. This was the dwelling-place of Chatham's fiery granddaughter.

"The aspect of the first court I entered was such as to keep one in the idea of having to do with a fortress rather than a mere peaceable dwelling-place. A number of fierce-looking and ill-clad Albanian soldiers were hanging about the place, inert, and striving as well as they could to bear the curse of tranquillity. Two or three of them were smoking their *tchibouques*, but the rest were lying torpid upon the flat stones like the bodies of departed brigands. I rode on to an inner part of the building, and at last, quitting my horses, I was conducted through a doorway that led me at once from an open court into an apartment on the ground-floor.

"As I entered, an Oriental figure in male costume approached me from the further end of the room, with many and profound bows, but the growing shades of evening prevented me from distinguishing the features of the personage who was receiving me with this solemn welcome. I had always understood, however, that Lady Hester wore the male attire, and began to utter in English the common civilities that seemed to be proper on the commencement of a visit by an uninspired mortal to a renowned prophetess, but the figure which I addressed only bowed so much the more, prostrating itself almost to the ground, but speaking never a word. I feebly strived not to be outdone in gestures of respect; but presently my bowing opponent saw the error under which I was acting and suddenly convinced me that at all events I was not yet in the presence of a superhuman being, by declaring that he was far from being Miladi, but was in fact nothing more or less godlike than the poor 'doctor' who had brought his mistress's letter to Beyrout.

"Lady Hester, in the right spirit of hospitality, now sent and commanded me to repose for a while after the fatigues of my journey, and to dine. The *cuisine* was of the oriental kind, highly artificial, and, as I thought, very

good. I rejoiced too in the wine of the Lebanon.

"After dinner the doctor arrived with Miladi's compliments and an intimation that she would be happy to see me if I were so disposed. It had now grown dark, and the rain was falling heavily, so that I got rather wet in following my guide through the open courts that I had to pass in order to reach the presence-chamber.

"At last I was ushered into a small chamber, protected from the draughts of air passing through the doorway by a folding screen; passing this I came alongside of a common European sofa. There sat the Lady Prophetess. She rose from her seat very formally, spoke to me a few words of welcome, pointed to a chair (one already placed exactly opposite to her sofa at a couple of yards' distance), and remained standing up to the full of her majestic height, perfectly still and motionless, until I had taken my appointed place. She then resumed her seat, not packing herself up according to the mode of the Orientals, but allowing her feet to rest on the floor or the footstool. At the moment of seating herself she covered her lap with a mass of loose white drapery. It occurred to me at the time that she did this in

order to avoid the awkwardness of sitting in manifest trousers under the eye of a European; but I can hardly fancy now that with her wilful nature she would have brooked such a compromise as this. I have been told by those who knew Lady Hester Stanhope in her youth, that any notion of a resemblance betwixt her and the great Chatham must have been fanciful; but at the time of my seeing her the large commanding features of the gaunt woman, then sixty years old or more, certainly reminded me of the Statesman that lay dying in the House of Lords, according to Copley's picture. Her face was of the most astonishing whiteness; she wore a very large turban, made seemingly of pale Cashmere shawls, and so disposed as to conceal the hair; her dress, from the chin down to the point at which it was concealed by the drapery on her lap, was a mass of white linen loosely folding. A couple of black slave-girls came at a signal and supplied their mistress as well as myself with lighted *tchibouques* and coffee. The custom of the East sanctions, and also commands, some moments of silence whilst you are inhaling the first few breaths of the fragrant pipe; the pause was broken I think by Miladi, who addressed to me some enquiries respecting my mother, but before I

had communicated any great amount of family facts, the spirit of the prophetess kindled within her.

"For hours and hours this wondrous white woman poured forth her speech. This half-ruined convent guarded by the proud heart of an English gentlewoman, was in truth the only spot throughout all Syria and Palestine in which the will of Mehemet Ali and his fierce lieutenant (Ibrahim Pasha) was not the law So long as Chatham's granddaughter breathed a breath of life there was always one hillock, and that too in the midst of a most populous district, which stood out and kept its freedom. Mehemet Ali, I am told, used to say that the Englishwoman had given him more trouble than all the insurgent people of Syria and Palestine.

"It was not until after midnight that my visit came to an end. When I quitted my seat the lady rose, and stood up in the same formal attitude which she had assumed on my entrance; at the same time she pushed the loose drapery from her lap, and let it fall down upon the floor."

During the winter of 1837-8 Lady Hester Stanhope was very unwell and not able to leave her room. She had a bad cough, and

Dr. Meryon feared she showed symptoms of water on the chest. He disapproved of her habit of having herself bled four or five times a year, but as she had continued this practice for twenty years she would not give it up. The doctor says[1] she had reduced herself to a state of complete emaciation, her veins showing themselves clearly on her deadly white skin. She prescribed for herself, as she did for others; she said that the Syrian climate was sure to relieve what she believed to be asthma, but at the same time she took no open-air exercise except spending a short time every day in her garden. In the spring of 1838, Lady Hester seemed to be much better, and one day at the end of March, Dr. Meryon found her sitting in her alcove in the garden enjoying her flowers and listening to the nightingales.[2]

"A sofa covered with maroon-coloured cloth, and having cushions of flowered chintz, stood across the back of the alcove. On this sofa Lady Hester was leaning, and being dressed in her white *abba* cloak with its large folds, she looked exactly like an antique statue of a Roman matron. Half-way up the avenue

[1] *Memoirs*, iii. 2. [2] *Ibid.* iii. 2.

stood an attendant in a handsome white dress, awaiting her call. As I advanced towards her between two hedges [the one of double jessamine in full bloom, and the other of bright green periwinkle covered with its blue flowers, and forming an azure band from one end to the other], I was struck with the magical illusion which Lady Hester Stanhope ever contrived to throw around herself in the commonest circumstances of life."

On this occasion Lady Hester was waiting to show Dr. Meryon a letter which she had received from the German Prince of Pückler Muskau, who was then at Sidon and had asked if she would allow him to visit her. She said that she thought the letter agreeable and sincere, and she asked Dr. Meryon to meet the Prince at Sidon. The Prince arrived at Djoun in March 1838, and remained there for a week. He published an account of his visit in 1846 in a book called *Briefe eines Verstorbenen*, and quotes his own letter to Lady Hester Stanhope.

"20 *mars*, 1838.

"MILADI,

"Sachant que vous n'aimez guère les visites des Etrangers, n'y ayant souvent ren-

contré qu'une vaine curiosité et quelque fois même de l'indiscrétion,—je vous avoue franchement, Madame, que ce n'est qu'en tremblant que je vous demande à mon tour la permission de vous rendre mes devoirs. Cependant permettez-moi de vous dire que depuis de longues années mon imagination a anticipé le plaisir de vous connaître, et que ce serait un vrai acte de cruauté de votre part si vous pouviez à présent, où ce moment tant désiré est enfin arrivé, me refuser le bonheur de présenter mes respects à la Reine de Palmyre! à la nièce du grand Pitt!

"Au reste, j'ose encore ajouter que d'après ce que j'ai entendu dire de vous, Madame, il doit régner quelque affinité entre nos caractères: car, comme vous, Miladi, je ne cherche notre salut futur que dans l'Orient, dont les populations encore plus près de Dieu et de la Nature, peuvent seules rafraîchir un jour cette civilisation pourrie de la vieille Europe, où tout est factice, et qui nous menace sous peu d'un nouveau genre de barbarie,—non pas celle du commencement, mais celle de la fin.

"Comme vous, Madame, je crois que l'astrologie n'est pas une vaine science, mais une science perdue. Comme vous, Miladi, je suis aristocrate de naissance et par principe,

parceque je trouve partout dans la nature l'aristocratie la plus prononcée. Enfin, comme vous, Madame, j'aime à veiller la nuit, et dormir le jour.

" Là je m'arrête : car pour le génie, la force de caractère, la vie grande et singulière que vous avez menée, ne ressemble pas qu'à Lady Stanhope qui veut.

" Je finis cette lettre, qui doit vous paraître déjà trop longue, en vous priant instamment de ne pas prendre pour des phrases ce que m'a dicté un cœur encore naïf et ingénu, quoique vieux. Je ne suis ni Français, ni Anglais ; je ne suis qu'un bon et simple Allemand, qu'on peut peut-être taxer de trop d'enthousiasme, mais jamais ni de flatterie ni de mauvaise foi.

" Le Prince de Pückler Muskau.

" P.S.—Dans le cas que vous consentiez à me recevoir, oserais-je vous prier encore de me faire accompagner par le Comte de Tattenbach, jeune homme à mon service, qui me verrait partir seul avec trop de regrets pour ne pas risquer encore cette demande ? Quoique blessé assez sévèrement d'un coup de pistolet, il n'a pu être retenu à Acre, pour ne pas manquer l'occasion de vous présenter ses hommages. Cependant, que votre volonté,

Miladi, soit faite en tout, et non pas la mienne."

This gentleman spoke of his letter as rather a singular application. He had heard that quite recently Lady Hester had refused to see any European, and that she had been greatly annoyed by M. de Lamartine's account of her, so that he now endeavoured to write in a style likely to please her. Lady Hester hesitated, but at last she consented to receive the Prince. She made great preparations for his arrival. Fresh gravel was laid down, several doors had a new coat of paint, and although Lady Hester had kept the doctor up till three in the morning of the day he was to go to meet the Prince, she was so much afraid of his not starting in time that she sent her servants to wake him at sunrise. "Fatigue and want of rest," he writes, "were ideas that never crossed her active mind; or, if they did, she pretended to forget them."

On the 23rd March 1838 Dr. Meryon started half an hour after sunrise, and was with the Prince by noon. He found him a tall man, about fifty years of age, and dressed,

the doctor thought, somewhat for effect, in a loose morning-gown, white trousers, a yellow scarf thrown over his shoulders, and a French *casquette* on his head. He had a chameleon crawling about on the tube of his pipe and all over his chair, and Dr. Meryon feared from the Prince's constant exclamations, "Où donc est le caméléon? où est mon petit bijou?" that there was to be a second edition of M. de Lamartine, who had made "more fuss about his lap-dog's food, bed, and the like, than even humanity requires." However, the chameleon proved to be an inoffensive pet.

In the meantime Lady Hester was busy with her preparations. She had indignantly refused to borrow the doctor's two "complete breakfast sets, one of French porcelain and the other of English ware," or his spare dinner-service, and sat contemplating the melancholy remnant of her own china, all spread out before her on the pavement of the courtyard. There was just enough of "a plain but decent white dinner-service," but so much of the breakfast set had been broken by the Arabs that all that Lady Hester could

collect was an old blue-and-white teapot, two teacups and saucers, and two plates, only one of which was perfect. Still she would not borrow the doctor's china. Lady Hester endeavoured to teach the two Arabs who were to wait at table how to perform their duties, and showed them on the pavement how to place the dishes. But the men would not learn, and at last Lady Hester consented to employ the doctor's Arab boy, who knew something of what was wanted. He had heard of Lady Hester as a mysterious invisible being, and was dreadfully frightened when summoned to her door: however, after having practised before her from three o'clock till sunset, with Lady Hester sitting by, "her stick in her hand, to point and to strike with," the unlucky Mahmoud was at length pronounced competent to wait on the Prince. There was no proper table to set the dishes on when they were taken off the ground, for Lady Hester only possessed one old card-table which she moved from room to room every day as she required it, but this the Prince seems to have been prepared for.[1]

[1] *Memoirs*, iii. 70.

At last, on Easter Sunday, April 15, 1838, Prince Pückler Muskau arrived at Djoun. Dr. Meryon had preceded him, and from his account Lady Hester Stanhope was quite inclined to like the German potentate. She said: "That's something like a man: he can put himself in a passion. I can't bear milk-and-water people. I am like a hot iron myself: pour cold water on it, and see how it hisses!" The doctor says:

"About five o'clock in the afternoon the Prince's two European servants rode into the courtyard at Djoûn, followed by three or four mules loaded with baggage. An immense sack contained bedding, two or three trunks were taken down, and a trestle with a deal top was immediately set up as a table in the Prince's room, with his ink and portfolio upon it, ready for any memorandums which he might wish to write down whilst they were fresh in his memory; thus showing the foresight of a traveller who was aware of the impossibility of finding in Eastern countries a thing so necessary as a table. Close upon these servants, there arrived seven or eight more mules with the Prince's Tartar attendant, the Count's servant, and the mule-drivers;

in all thirteen animals to keep, besides men."[1]

Half an hour later, Prince Pückler Muskau and Count Tattenbach arrived, and were received by Dr. Meryon. On this occasion "the Prince's costume was picturesque, and skilfully arranged for effect. An immense Leghorn hat, lined under the brim with green silk, shaded his very fair complexion. An Arab *keffiyah* was thrown over his shoulders as a scarf, and he wore a pair of very wide blue Turkish trousers. His boots were Parisian in their cut, and an excellent fit." As soon as the Prince and Count Tattenbach had rested, they were received by Lady Hester, and they remained with her till a late hour of the night. The Prince confessed to Dr. Meryon that Lady Hester had lost so many of her teeth, and spoke in so low a tone of voice, that he had difficulty in hearing her; he therefore pretended to be deaf and was allowed to draw his chair near to her divan. Even then he lost much of what she said, as she seemed sometimes to be addressing

[1] *Memoirs*, iii. 73.

herself to the wall, and sometimes to her own lap.

Next day the Prince was allowed to see the two Arab mares, and fortunately he confided only to the doctor that, although he admired them both, the hollow back of one was "a natural defect and not a miraculous formation." Lady Hester kept the Prince writing for her from noon till the evening, and as he wished to remain for a few days at Djoun he complained of indisposition. Dr. Meryon says that the Prince little knew the consequence of being unwell in Lady Hester's house, for her invariable remedy was a large dose of Epsom salts, of which she actually kept a supply in a barrel.

"This black dose was immediately administered to the Prince, and he spoke in very ill-humour about it, as he thought it had done him no good. But he was much mistaken if he supposed that any objections he could have raised (short of making his escape) would have saved him from it."

Count Tattenbach was also imprudent enough to complain of fatigue, and was compelled to swallow a similar dose. In his case, when

From the painting in oils by Edward Lear, 1867.

CEDARS OF LEBANON.

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Lady Hester admitted him to her presence, she considered him hardly convalescent, and the Count "politely consented to take another black dose."

Nothing of these severe remedies appeared in Prince Pückler Muskau's own account of his visit to Djoun, when he published it in 1846. This account has been thus translated :

"It was a beautiful day, such as is only known in the favoured South: the air so silver-clear . . . that one fancied one could actually see through the mountains, when I, attended (at Lady Hester Stanhope's desire) by my whole train of slaves and servants, mounted the winding road that led to the little fortress of Djoûn. We had hitherto been crossing barren and stony mountains, with here and there a few trees and brush-wood. Here in the valley there was more cultivation, partly on laboriously raised terraces; and in the midst, surrounded by the dusty bed of a dried-up mountain torrent, rose a steep cone, on whose summit, within an encircling wall, appeared the roofs of several detached buildings. Here it was that the Lady dwelt.

"As the gates opened I was received by

my friend Dr. Meryon, and installed in a little pavilion, surrounded by gardens, and entered through a green verandah covered with climbing roses, as comfortable as it was rural. During a rapidly served meal the doctor told me that Lady Hester hoped I would stay eight days with her; she was, however, seldom visible before midnight. 'Consequently,' he added, smiling, 'your visit will be of eight nights rather than eight days.' 'Capital!' I cried. 'This not only suits the land of the Thousand and One Nights, but my own habits also, for I act the night-watchman wherever I go. I shall look forward with real impatience to my midnight *rendez-vous*.'

"The usual siesta, more refreshing in this climate than a night's rest, filled up the interval, and at the appointed hour my Turco-English guide appeared to conduct me to his mistress. A black slave-girl lighted us through several passages and courts (for Djoûn consists of a number of small isolated dwellings connected by verandahs), till we reached the largest of all. This is inhabited by Lady Hester alone, and never entered without her express permission, a police regulation so rigidly enforced that even the doctor hastily left me at the door. Here an older negress

took charge of me, and led me along a nearly pitch-dark corridor to a thick red portière, behind which shone a light that proved I was at last on the threshold of the long-sought sanctuary.

"My heart beat high with excitement, for after all the romantic reports that I had heard I imagined that I was to see something fantastic and extraordinary. It was quite the reverse.

"In a small room, as simply furnished as the room assigned to me, and on a very poor divan, sat the Lady of Djoûn, evidently still suffering from the effects of a severe illness. She signed to me, very graciously, to take an English arm-chair placed opposite to her. In spite of Lady Hester Stanhope's evident weakness she received me with great liveliness, and her whole demeanour was that of a woman of the world in the European sense, with an elegance and grace of manner not of everyday occurrence among Englishwomen. This, combined with the Oriental dignity and repose of her bearing, gave her a peculiar charm.

"Instead of splendidly equipped retainers prostrating themselves on the ground before their stern mistress, the one slave-girl who brought us pipes and coffee behaved as she

would have done in any other well-ordered household, and there was no attempt at display. Lady Hester's own dress was simplicity itself. A red turban, a white burnous reaching to her feet, red silk Turkish trousers and stockings (for on these thick carpets slippers are not required), showed that she had long since discarded the tasteless Frank dress for the comfortable garb of the East. When she soon afterwards rose, and, leaning on a long wand, crossed the room to show me something of which she had spoken, she looked to me like a Sibyl of old. The pale regular features, the dark flashing eyes, the tall white-robed figure with its head-gear of flaming red, the severe and stately mien, the sonorous and rather deep-toned voice, together produced a striking and really imposing effect, without the slightest affectation.[1] On the contrary, no one could be more natural or more real than I found Lady Hester from first to last. Here was a strong, almost too masculine, character that despised every kind of pretence.

"She began thus: 'Since my fortune melted away I live here like a Dervish; and require no luxuries. The older I grow the less, thank God! I need, and the more

[1] At this period, 1838, Lady Hester Stanhope was sixty-two.

eagerly I seek to draw nearer to Nature, from which civilization too much estranges us. My roses' [and the Prince said that he had never seen such masses of roses anywhere as in Lady Hester's garden], 'my roses are my jewels: the sun, moon, and stars are my clocks: fruit and water supply my fare. Now I read in your physiognomy that you are an epicure, for I know how to interpret the stars and the faces of men. How will you ever stand this life for eight whole days?'

"I could answer this the more becomingly because I had already found that Lady Hester Stanhope's guests were not condemned to a dish of fruit and a glass of water only. But my one wish was to lead her back to talk of the stars, and in this I found no difficulty, for her belief in astrology was absolute. During the eight days I was at Djoûn, spending six or eight hours every night in conversation with Lady Hester, I may truly say that I never felt one moment's fatigue or ennui."

Lady Hester showed Prince Pückler Muskau the letter she had received from the Bedouin Chief Nasār, son-in-law of Mohanna-el-Fadel, written in answer to her appeal to him as her ally. The letter, which was enclosed in a

cover embroidered with gold, was thus translated :

"Nasār, the Lion of the Desert, sends greeting, with love and service, to Hester, the Star of the Morning.

"Those who own the friendship of Mohanna-el-Fadel, and obey the sabre of Nasār, hold the whole Great Desert in the hollow of the hand, even as the ring encircles the finger. Therefore, warriors without number, horses, camels, powder and shot, and whatever is required for food,—all, all, is ready for thee. Thou hast only to send thine orders to

"Thy true Friend,

"NASĀR."

Lady Hester, when she showed the Prince this letter, said, "The Arabs have never looked upon me in the light either of a man or of a woman, but as 'un être à part.' And the Prince adds to this statement, "Lady Hester is often unjust to the English : she treats Dr. Meryon, devoted to her and necessary to her as he is, with icy coldness, and his wife, who has been living for years at Dar Joun, is not admitted to her presence."

Of Lady Hester's two Arab mares Prince

Pückler Muskau says that the chestnut Laila had "a growth on the back very like a Turkish saddle." The other, Lulu, was silver-grey, "with the head and eyes of a gazelle." The Prince continues:

"The mares are kept quite apart, in a separate and rather an ornate building, with a summer stable, a court, and a garden. The garden is kept carefully locked, and is guarded by two black slaves. Twice a day the mares are led out for exercise in a larger court, a grass-plot enclosed by a wall. The first time that Count Tattenbach and I went to see them, they were standing loose in their garden under an embroidered tent-cover. Long accustomed to the homage of privileged visitors, they behaved just like two old Princesses obliged to grant an audience that bored them to death. Very slowly and indifferently they turned their heads, and looked at us with an air of haughty repose. They were both finely formed and very good-looking animals, but had long since grown too fat."

Lady Hester was somewhat annoyed that the Prince had brought two female slaves with him. One, an Abyssinian, he took into Lady

Hester's private garden without leave, and he did not improve matters by presenting her with the other, a little black girl who was dressed as a boy. However, the Prince was delighted with the garden, and describes its beauties by day and by night.

"On a night when the moon shone nearly as brightly as the sun does with us, Lady Hester conducted me into the sanctuary, unprofaned by vulgar eyes, of her private garden, —the most enchanting and the most luxuriant, in all the lavish profusion of the South, that it is possible to conceive. A whole world of roses of all sizes and colours, and all in full bloom, shone resplendent in the magic illumination of the full moon. More than once, in my delight, I buried my face in these delicious masses of roses as in a crimson cushion. Then we came to a lofty terrace, set with flower-vases and laid out along the verge of the rocky precipice. From hence, unseen oneself, one may enjoy the most beautiful view, looking across the billowy mountains to the wide stretch of sea beyond. The trees and shrubs are disposed with that true comprehension of pictorial effect which belongs to most educated Englishwomen."

CHAPTER IX

CLOSING YEARS

Soon after the Prince Pückler Muskau's departure there was an uproar between the Christian and the Mohammedan servants in Lady Hester Stanhope's household. Some of them even threatened to murder an old servant named Pierre, and fell upon him in the dead of the night. Luckily Lady Hester heard his cries, and the next morning the culprits were summoned to appear before her. When Dr. Meryon called that afternoon he found her seated on her divan, with her heavy Arab war-mace in her hand. She said: "I have settled them. My arm has some strength in it yet, weak as I am. I have given it to them pretty well, and I don't think they'll molest Pierre again."

"I suggested that she should turn the worst of them away, and merely keep eight or ten servants, for they were only a torment

to her. 'Yes, but my rank!' was her characteristic answer." [1]

Towards the end of May 1838, Lady Hester Stanhope was informed that a party of European pilgrims were detained outside the gates of Sidon in great distress, two of their number having died of the plague. The pilgrims had asked for shelter at a neighbouring monastery,[2] but, although the monks would have befriended them, the Syrian health-officers kept them in tents on the seashore, strictly guarded by a cordon of soldiers. Lady Hester heard that these pilgrims were poor Germans, and with her unfailing kindness to any one in distress, she immediately sent them a quantity of fresh lemons, rose and violet syrups, and a supply of a cooling drink called *capillaire*, (made from the maidenhair fern). She added this note: "This humble offering is sent by Lady Hester Stanhope to the sick Germans, with her request that they will make known their wants to her, whether for medicines or for whatever they may need."

[1] *Memoirs*, iii. 47. [2] *Ibid.* iii. 196.

Lady Hester's messenger had scarcely started when a letter reached her from one of the pilgrims, who signed himself Baron de Büsech, Knight of Malta. The letter reported that one of the Germans was seriously ill, and the writer begged that Lady Hester Stanhope's resident doctor might visit the camp. Lady Hester had no objection, but Dr. Meryon declined to go. He confessed that he was afraid of the plague, of which he had heard that the doctor who was travelling with the pilgrims had just died, and he thought it would be best for them to call in one of the doctors resident at Sidon. Lady Hester therefore wrote to Baron de Büsech on the 26th May:

"Although I myself have no fear of the plague or of persons infected with it, almost all Franks have. The English physician who is with me happens to be of that number, and it does not depend on me to cure people of what I consider to be prejudices. Our days are numbered, and everything is in the hands of God." [1]

Lady Hester tried in vain to overcome the

[1] *Memoirs*, iii. 2.

doctor's objections. He excused himself by saying that he and she would never agree as to the treatment, whether the sick man had the plague or not, and that as he could not be allowed a free hand, he thought it better to keep out of the business altogether by saying that he was afraid of the plague. Lady Hester reproved him sharply, but he listened unconcerned. A second letter came from the sick Germans, and this caused Dr. Meryon to change his mind. The writer signed himself Maximilian, Duke of Bavaria, and he was, as Dr. Meryon is careful to say, "a Prince of the blood-royal, and brother-in-law of the reigning monarch." Besides two Barons de Büsech (Frederick and Charles), the Prince was accompanied by an Imperial Chamberlain, two officers of the Bavarian Guards, a painter, "an accomplished musician," and fifteen or sixteen servants. These then were the so-called sick Germans, the poor distressed pilgrims.

Lady Hester knew that all the shops in Beyrout were closed for fear of the plague, and she thought that these German travellers might not like the flat cakes of unleavened

bread usually eaten at Sidon. She therefore had fifty or sixty large loaves of English bread baked, and she continued to supply bread to the Prince as long as he remained in her neighbourhood. She also sent him tea and a teapot, rum, brandy, and whatever she thought would be of use. Dr. Meryon was the very unwilling bearer of a letter in which Lady Hester told Prince Maximilian that he would prescribe for the sick person, and she added a number of directions with reference to the Syrian climate and the precautions to be observed, fearing, as she said, that on a first visit to a Prince, the doctor might not venture to be decided in his orders.

When Dr. Meryon reached Prince Maximilian's camp, the Prince, he says, received him "with great condescension," and conversed with him for some time. It was doubtful whether the sick man, who turned out to be the Prince's own black servant, had the plague or not, and he was too weak to leave his tent. However, Dr. Meryon says that "a Turk was hired for a pecuniary compensation to attend on him, because the Mahometans, imbued with the persuasion that

whatever is clearly the will of the Almighty must come to pass, never refuse assistance to persons afflicted with contagious maladies." The Turk supported the negro to a sheltered spot under some trees, where Dr. Meryon had him placed "in a favourable position, and inspected his patient as well as was possible from a distance of five feet." The doctor could not decide whether poor Wellington, as the negro was called, had the plague or not, but he comforted him as well as he could, and the negro, who was a free black, born in New York, was delighted to hear English spoken again. Dr. Meryon had a shelter of branches erected over Wellington's tent to keep off the sun, and luckily an army surgeon, who was called in, pronounced the negro's illness to be typhus fever, so that the Prince's party were released from quarantine.

Dr. Meryon found Lady Hester with her mace in her hand on his return; and in his absence the steward "had been sent for to rate the maids, who had been caught scaling the garden-wall before sun-rise, and going down to the spring, where they were seen

with some one." [1] This conduct was entirely against Lady Hester's orders, and one maid, Zezefoon, had been found untying parcels and bundles, ready to carry off what she could. The rating by the steward was not considered to be a sufficient punishment, and Zezefoon was locked up until she should learn to behave better.

Lady Hester did not feel satisfied with Dr. Meryon's report of the sick Germans, as they were called. She despatched a servant to the Prince with seven black doses and directions how to take them, for himself and six of his suite; eight more doses were to be sent next day for the rest of the party, and Dr. Meryon was requested to go to the Prince's camp to satisfy himself that every dose had been taken. However, when the doctor arrived, he found the Prince seated on a divan in the open air, the ground rolled and watered near him, and pipes and coffee ready. He was told that the Prince wished for permission to thank Lady Hester for her attention to him, and to know when he might visit her; and the unfortunate doctor was obliged to set out at once

[1] *Memoirs*, iii. 205.

on his three hours' ride in the dark back to Djoun.

Lady Hester sent the following gracious reply:

"*To His Royal Highness Maximilian, Duke of Bavaria.*

"DJOUN, *June* 8, 1838.

"HIGHNESS,

"I cannot sufficiently appreciate the honour you intend me in wishing to visit my hermitage. But permit me to impose this condition on you: that you say not a word more, neither you nor the noblemen in your suite, of those trifling services which you have so graciously and benevolently accepted. Allow me also to acquaint Your Highness that although I was in my time a woman of the world, for these last twenty years I have been nothing but a philosopher who turns out of her road for nobody. When Alexander the Great visited Diogenes, he neither changed his dress nor moved his tub for him. Pardon me, Prince, if I imitate his example.

"There was a time when my house was passable, but now there are many rooms in ruins for want of repairs (especially a large

pavilion in the garden, now tumbling down from an earthquake), so that I could not now lodge more than three or four persons at a time. What lodging I have for you is, first of all, a little garden on the east side of my residence, with a small saloon, and outside of the door two *mustabys*" (raised stone benches), "where two persons might sleep. Adjoining the saloon is a bedroom, and at the back of that a sleeping-room for two valets, with mattresses on the floor, according to the custom of the country. The saloon has a trellis in front. Just out of the garden-gate is a little place to make coffee, or to boil water for shaving; and opposite to it is another room for ordinary strangers, and where Count Tattenbach was lodged. For the other servants there is room in one of the courtyards. As for my own divan, it has been in a ruinous state for some years, and I inhabit at present a badly furnished little room.

"I beg Your Highness will consider the little garden, as well as the pavilion in it which I have just mentioned, as your own until the ship arrives which you expect. You can make your excursions in the mountain when you like. You can bring with you two or three of the gentlemen of your suite, and these can make room for others in their turn.

Thus then I shall expect Your Royal Highness on Saturday evening.

"I have the honour to salute you, Prince, with the most perfect esteem and highest consideration, begging you to accept with your well-known nobleness the welcome of the Dervish,

"H. L. STANHOPE." [1]

On Saturday the 9th June everything was ready. A lamb had been killed the day before; beef had been procured from the only place in the neighbourhood where it was sold; fruit and vegetables had come from distant gardens; fish had been ordered from Sidon; bills of fare had been made out as a guide to the cook by Lady Hester Stanhope herself, and she had looked over the table linen, and had given out the silver spoons and forks which she always kept locked up. The Arab servants were dressed in their best clothes, and were unusually obliging, in the hope of *bakshysh* from the Prince,—thus justifying Lady Hester's remark that only two things could overcome their usual torpor, money or a good flogging.

[1] *Memoirs*, iii. 221.

But, after all her preparations, poor Lady Hester was too ill to receive the Prince. The doctor found her in bed, with a great deal of fever and severe pain in her left side. She said she had had no sleep, and was far too ill to receive Prince Maximilian. She was very pale, with a parched skin and short breathing, but as resolute as ever. The doctor did not think her pulse so feverish as he expected it to be, but Lady Hester's reply was:

"This is nothing; it is when the thunder is in the air that you should feel my pulse. At that moment, if I were to meet a thousand men opposed to me I should brave them all, but when the storm is over my pulse falls into its natural state and all is quiet again. Anybody but you would say now I must be bled, and, whether you approve it or not, bled I shall be. So be so good as to raise no difficulties, and to go off immediately with my apologies to the Prince. I have neither breath nor strength enough to undergo the exertion of conversation, so put him off you must." [1]

Dr. Meryon owns that Lady Hester's

[1] *Memoirs*, iii. 222.

remedy did her good. He met the Prince on his way to visit her, and his Royal Highness expressed great concern at her illness. He then turned back, got on board a European steamer which luckily arrived at Sidon that night, and left Syria, "but too happy to quit a country where he had met with so many vexations and had been exposed to so much danger." Before Prince Maximilian left Dr. Meryon, he consulted him whether he might send Lady Hester his portrait from Europe. The doctor replied that "she could not but be pleased to have that, which next to seeing his Royal Highness, would best recall him to her mind." But Lady Hester immediately wrote to refuse the portrait.

The heat at this time, June 1838, was so great that "the covers of books would curl up at the corners as they lay on the table, and the furniture split where it was joined; cockchafers were a plague by day, and mosquitoes an insufferable torment by night." Yet one or two visitors made their way to Djoun: Dr. Loeve, a distinguished Oriental scholar and traveller; an English country gentleman whose name is only given as

Mr. M.; and a person whom Lady Hester Stanhope believed to be a Russian spy.[1] She called Dr. Loeve "a sort of a *savant*," and thought little of him, but Dr. Meryon, who was sent to sit with him in the Strangers' Garden, considered that his knowledge of languages was prodigious. Mr. M. belonged to Trinity College, Cambridge, and had been long abroad. Lady Hester liked talking to him, but she complained that in conversation

"he was like a dog at a fair, that goes from one booth to another, sniffing here and there, and stealing gingerbread nuts. When he sat with her in the evening, he was constantly turning his head to the open window, as if he thought somebody was coming in that way."

Another visitor was frequently received by Lady Hester. This was Sulyman Hamâady, who filled the same place with the Emir Beshŷr that Quentin Durward found occupied by Tristan l'Hermite at the Court of Louis XI.; that of his confidant and his executioner. Dr. Meryon often met Hamâady

[1] *Memoirs*, iii. 246.

riding into the village on a beautiful grey Arab, whose tail, reaching to the ground, was partly dyed red with henna. His office was looked on as honourable, and he was always lodged in the best houses.

"Never was there a man more dreaded than Hamâady. He was rather thin, apparently all nerve, with large, full, rolling black eyes, and, on common occasions, without any sinister or harsh expression, though very grave in his deportment."

The doctor complains that the executioner was so fond of a bowl of goat's milk for breakfast that when he was in the village no one else could purchase any: Lady Hester used to offer him a glass of champagne, but he preferred brandy.[1]

In the month of June 1838 travelling in the Lebanon was almost impracticable. An insurrection had broken out, the Druzes were within a day's march of Djoun, and the neighbouring villages had been stripped of cattle and goods. Even the monks on the Lebanon had sent all their valuables and their church

[1] *Memoirs*, iii. 110.

furniture to Sidon for safety, but Lady Hester Stanhope was quite unconcerned.

"Oh," she said, "that's not all. The people of Djoun are in a fright and were going to desert the village, but I sent word to them to remain where they were and that no harm should come to them. I have no fear myself! I would throw all my doors open if the Druses were outside, and I should not be afraid that anybody would touch me. I foretold all this; in a short time you will not be able to ride from here to Sidon; the country will be over-run with armed men. But I shall be as cool from first to last as I should be at a fête. All the cowards may go, I want only those who can send a bullet where I direct them. If you ask why I keep such men as Seyd Ahmed and some others, it is just because I know they would no more mind killing a score of people than they would mind eating their dinner."

Lady Hester had no sense of fear, nor did she hesitate to speak her mind to anybody. She told Dr. Meryon that, when she lived with Mr. Pitt, the Duke of Cumberland enjoyed hearing her outspoken remarks, and when some offender came into the room the

Prince would cry out, "Now, little bull-dog! have at him!"[1]

Dr. Meryon's wife and children were settled near Lady Hester Stanhope's house, but Mrs. Meryon did not appreciate Lady Hester at all, and heartily disliked Syria. The doctor says:

"When I and my family were comfortably settled in our little cottage in the village, Lady Hester appointed a morning to receive Mrs. Meryon. I conducted her to the saloon, where, after introducing her and sitting a little while, I left her, and retired, in compliance with Lady Hester's usual custom of never liking to have more than one person with her at a time. Mrs. Meryon remained for three hours, when I sent her home under the care of a servant, and presented myself to hear Lady Hester's opinion of her, a necessary consequence that always followed when any person quitted her whom she had seen for the first time. Our conference lasted until past midnight. The night proved very tempestuous, the wind howled, the thunder rolled, the rain beat against the shutters, and when I returned to the village, wet through, I found

[1] *Memoirs*, ii. 194.

Mrs. Meryon sitting disconsolate, terrified at the war of the elements, alone in the midst of the horrors of the night, and unable to make herself understood by the Arab servants."[1]

Mrs. Meryon told her husband that Lady Hester had received her very kindly, and at the end of the interview had sent for a handsome Turkish jacket of gold brocade, which she put on Mrs. Meryon with her own hands, and wound a beautifully embroidered muslin turban round her head. Mrs. Meryon did not understand that this was the Eastern way of making her a present, so she took off the jacket and the turban and sent them back next day. This, Dr. Meryon adds, was done unknown to him, and he was well aware that it would be a grievous offence in Lady Hester's eyes. He was not mistaken, but for a month Lady Hester took no notice, although she sent one of her Arabs to cut Mrs. Meryon's bell-wires and take away her bells. Dr. Meryon told Lady Hester in a note that he knew that one of her servants had been at his house secretly, and that he felt sure nobody would have presumed to

[1] *Memoirs*, i. 141.

remove the bells without her orders; and some months later she said:

"Doctor, it was I who ordered Osman to take away the bells. The people in this country must never suppose there is any one connected with my establishment who puts himself on an equality with me, no matter in what. If I had let those bells hang much longer the sound of my own would not have been attended to. As it is, half of my servants have become disobedient from seeing how my will is disputed by you and your family, who have always a hundred reasons for not doing what I wish to be done. I can't submit to render an account of my actions, for if I was not called upon to do so by Mr. Pitt I am sure I shan't by other people; so let us say no more about it."

Dr. Meryon adds that he "complied with Lady Hester's whims, or rather that he admitted the good sense of her observations, for he well knew that Lady Hester never did anything without a kind or a substantial motive."[1]

But a more serious cause of offence had

[1] *Memoirs*, ii. 139.

arisen before this time. In January 1831 the Pasha of Damascus had written to Lady Hester to ask if she would spare her doctor for a short time to cure a friend of his, "who was afflicted in the roof of his mouth, a complaint which was peculiarly painful to him and a source of deep regret to the faithful, in consequence of his being one of the most distinguished chanters of the Koran." The Pasha was an old friend of Lady Hester Stanhope's, and had also "honoured Dr. Meryon with his particular notice" when at Damascus some years before, so that she laid great stress on his obeying this summons immediately.

But here the doctor was firm. He says:

"As I did not think it right to leave my family for three weeks or a month alone in a cottage where no human being could understand them, I suggested to Lady Hester the propriety of writing a polite excuse to the Pasha, expressing my inability to comply with his wishes for the present. But she had my compliance so much at heart that it was agreed she should see Mrs. Meryon herself and endeavour to remove her scruples, Lady Hester flattering herself she could contrive,

with her accustomed fertility in expedients for all difficulties, some means to reconcile her to my departure, and show her the groundlessness of her fears. Mrs. Meryon accordingly paid a second visit to Lady Hester, who began by endeavouring to act on her pride by telling her that my reputation would be ruined among all the Pashas if I refused to go to a great man like this Hassan Effendi, and that Lady Hester's own consequence would be lessened. Moreover, the English Ambassador at Constantinople would hear of it and take it ill, with many arguments of the like sort. Finding this mode of reasoning had no effect, Lady Hester tried to frighten Mrs. Meryon by assuring her very gravely that there were dervishes much interested in the well-being of holy men, and especially in that of a Chanter of the Word of the Prophet, who would by unknown charms inflict all sorts of evils upon her, make hair grow on her face, bring out blotches on her skin, etc., all of which Lady Hester affected to believe. Mrs. Meryon lent a civil but incredulous ear. Her ladyship then endeavoured to gain her consent by holding out the benefits that would accrue to me in a pecuniary light, and the shawls and brocades that I should probably bring back to her, as presents from such grand folks."

LADY HESTER STANHOPE'S RESIDENCE AT DJOUN ON MOUNT LEBANON.

p. 208]

But the foretaste of solitude in a Lebanon village during the winter, which the many lonely evenings already passed there had given Mrs. Meryon,

"was too strongly impressed on her mind, and she respectfully but firmly answered, 'If my husband chooses to go to Damascus of course I cannot help it, but he never can do so without making me miserable.' Upon this they parted, with no goodwill on her ladyship's side; and from that hour began a system of hostility to Mrs. Meryon which never ceased until our departure. That same evening Lady Hester reproached me for yielding to the idle fears of a woman, painting very ridiculous and amusing pictures of the henpecked husbands she had known in her time, and, in conclusion, she told me she should write to the Pasha telling him I was governed by my wife and therefore could not come."[1]

By this time the Lebanon roads were deep in snow, following on a rainy season, when Dr. Meryon says that

"there were days when it was impossible to get from house to house owing to the violence of the wind, and the torrents of water that fell

[1] *Memoirs*, i. 144.

from the heavens. And when the rain abated, the mud mixed with the dung of cattle so completely filled the paths that it was impossible to walk five steps."

Besides this, the mountain was full of jackals, and wolves appeared occasionally. Once when Dr. Meryon was making his way home about two in the morning, accompanied as usual by three or four of Lady Hester's mastiffs,

"the dogs set up a sharp bark, and from a shelving terrace of the rock above my head a wolf made a desperate leap across the path with the dogs at his heels, and like dark shadows they all disappeared as swift as lightning. I heard their rush for about ten or fifteen seconds, and in about as many minutes more the dogs returned panting." [1]

Wild-boars were also to be seen, but Mrs. Meryon's greatest alarm was due to a serpent. Dr. Meryon observes that this "little fright" was not unknown in Syria.[2]

"On a Sunday in July, Mrs. Meryon was reading the morning service with her children,

[1] *Memoirs*, i. 183. [2] *Ibid.* iii. 261.

when she observed outside the open window an immense number of sparrows making sharp cries, fluttering about the terrace, and hovering round some object. This she perceived to be the body of a huge serpent hanging in one coil from the rafters of the verandah, suspended by the head and the tail."

Mrs. Meryon had the courage to tell her children to go very quietly for assistance. Seven servants hurried to the verandah; the cook shot the serpent through the body with the porter's blunderbuss, which was kept ready loaded on a peg, and the others killed the creature with bludgeons when it fell. It measured over seven feet in length, and was dark brown on the back and grey underneath.[1]

This adventure did not make Mrs. Meryon the less anxious to escape from Syria, and when, as a last effort, Lady Hester's black girl Fatoûm rushed in whilst she and the doctor were at breakfast and abused them for their conduct, Mrs. Meryon, though not understanding a word, saw the insolence of the girl's manner, and promptly taking her by the shoulders she turned her out of the room.

[1] *Memoirs*, iii. 261.

The doctor had hoped that as Mrs. Meryon did not speak Arabic she would know nothing of the disturbances among the Druzes, but the old washerwoman spoke to him one day so earnestly of the danger his family were in, that Mrs. Meryon guessed that something was amiss and he was obliged to disclose part of the truth.

On the 6th February, 1838, Lady Hester talked to Dr. Meryon from one in the afternoon till ten at night, trying to convince him that there could be but one will at Djoun, and that was the will of the owner. He admitted this, but added that there seemed to be no way out of the difficulty but for him and his family to return to Europe.

"Lady Hester gave me to understand that we might certainly go if we liked, but that we should find it more difficult than I suspected. This was no idle threat of hers, and I knew it. Not a peasant would dare to let out his camels, mules, or asses, to one who was known to have incurred Lady Hester's displeasure; and to send to Sidon to hire them was equally impossible, seeing that no one would go willingly on such an

errand, or, if he did, her influence extended far enough to frighten camel-drivers and muleteers from their engagement. The close of the conversation was a separation far from amicable, so that for three days I did not see Lady Hester."

However, after this ebullition on Lady Hester's part, "all was gentleness and urbanity" when, on the 11th, Dr. Meryon was sent for. Lady Hester made no further objection to his departure, although she told him that wherever he might go he would regret not having followed her counsels, but she wished him well, and only regretted his unfortunate error in having given up his liberty to his wife. Such, the doctor observes, was Lady Hester's view of what she called "the slavery of marriage."

The doctor busied himself for some days in writing letters for Lady Hester, whose sight had of late failed so much that, as she said, it put out her eyes to write even a few lines. He offered to send her some books, but she refused, because after he left she would have no one to read to her. Dr. Meryon wrote by her bedside for hours every

day, till he was worn out with fatigue, but he willingly tried to set her affairs in order, so that she should be in want of nothing.

For Lady Hester was now far from well. She had a bad cough, and became very weak ; thin as she already was, she now seemed emaciated, and as she could only lie on one side she got little rest. She often suffered from a sense of suffocation and needed air, and yet she knew that if she fell into a doze, her wretched Arab girls would never shut either door or window till she awoke shivering. Even before this time, Dr. Meryon had said that poor Lady Hester's paroxysms of grief quite terrified him, and one day she wept and sobbed till he himself could not help bursting into tears.[1] Lady Hester, always kind, begged him to drink some coffee with a little orange-flower water in it, and to walk in the garden. After a time she went on :

"How am I to get better when I can't have a moment's repose from morning till night ? When I was ill on former occasions I could amuse myself with my thoughts, or with cutting out things in paper. I have a

[1] *Memoirs*, ii. 152.

closet full of models in paper of rooms and arches and vaults, and pavilions and buildings. But now, if I want a pair of scissors they can't be found ; if I want a needle and thread there is none forthcoming, and I am wearied to death about the smallest trifles."

Lady Hester paused, and then added :

"I have been under the saw" (drawing her finger backwards and forwards across her other hand), "and not a tooth but what has told. But that is God's will, and I do not repine. It is man's ingratitude that wounds me most."

Lady Hester's money difficulties had weighed heavily upon her since the cessation of her pension in 1837, and no doubt she referred to this in alluding to man's ingratitude. She had been obliged to borrow money at very high interest, losing heavily too by the rate of exchange ; and had even sold forty English guineas (saved from the shipwreck, and treasured as her brother James Stanhope's parting gift) for their weight in gold. Colonel Stanhope had left her an annuity which would have amply provided for her, but it was not available as yet.

Lady Hester Stanhope's nearest neighbour

at Djoun was the Emir Beshŷr, now Prince of the Druze country. He was a cruel barbarous man, whose atrocities were said to transcend belief. Lady Hester was quite aware that this man, in whose territory she lived, was her determined enemy. He annoyed her in every way, hoping to get rid of her, but she was perfectly unmoved. At last, some members of the Emir's household were employed to tell her of the danger to which she exposed herself if she should venture to oppose him, or to show hostility to so powerful a Prince.[1]

"But Lady Hester Stanhope was not a person to be frightened; and when she found a fit opportunity of getting one of the Emir's people before her in the presence of some other persons, so as to be sure that what she said must reach his ears and could not well be softened down, she seized her chance. She desired the Emir's servants to listen to the message which she wished to send to their master; and then she said, so that all could hear, 'I know very well that there is not a more profound and bloody tyrant on the face of the earth than the Emir, and I am aware

[1] *Memoirs*, i. 91.

that no one is thought safe from his poisons and his daggers. But I myself hold him in the most sovereign contempt, and set him at defiance. Tell the Emir this, tell him that he is a dog and a monster, and let him know that if he wishes to try his strength with me I am ready!"

On another occasion one of the Emir's household came on some message to Lady Hester, and laid aside his pistols and his sabre before entering her room. She at once had them brought in and desired him to put them on.

"Don't think that I am afraid of your master the Emir," said she, "or of you either. You may tell him that I don't care a fig for his poisons. I know not what fear is. It is for the Emir, and for those who serve him, to tremble. And you can tell the Emir's son that if he enters my doors I will stab him myself. My people shall not shoot him, but I will stab him, yes, I myself, and with my own hand."

In relating this story Lady Hester added:

"The Emir knew that I always slept with a *Khanjar* (dagger) by my side, and his

messenger was so terrified of me that he trembled like an aspen leaf, and I could have knocked him down with a feather. The messenger gave the Emir my answer, and I heard all that happened from a tailor who was at work in the room, and who spoke of it afterwards. The Emir puffed *such* a puff of smoke out of his pipe when my message was delivered, and then he got up and walked out. He was deliberating how he should get rid of me. But the executioner Hamâady said to the Emir, 'You had better have nothing to do with her. Fair or foul means, all are alike to her. She has been so much flattered during her life that no praise can turn her head. Money she thinks no more of than dirt, and as for fear, she knows not what it is. Therefore, Your Highness,' Hamâady concluded, 'as for me, I wash my hands of her altogether.'" [1]

Dr. Meryon was now about to leave Lady Hester. He had had much to bear during the twenty-eight years which had elapsed since he was first appointed as her doctor, and he now had to consider the welfare of his wife and children. But for his family,

[1] *Memoirs*, iii. 92.

one cannot believe that he would have left her in such precarious health, with failing sight and shaken nerves, many miles from any European aid. Still, Lady Hester had not wished him to remain, and, generous to the last, she desired him to make it known everywhere that she herself had insisted on his departure. She declared that she was as well as she should ever be, and she begged him to explain that she was not left unprotected, "because one knows how apt people are to put bad constructions on everything." Probably Lady Hester could no longer afford the doctor's salary.

She had now much reduced her establishment. At one time she employed thirty-four servants, including bailiffs, grooms, muleteers, ass-drivers, cooks, porters, gardeners, and five female attendants. Nearly all these were now dismissed, and she parted with her flock of sheep. She had collected a herd of a hundred goats, but she had all their throats cut in one day, on finding that the goat-herds had been using their flesh and milk without her permission. Lady Hester had several horses besides the two sacred Arabs, and finding that

her grooms had ill-used them, she sent for her principal bailiff, and said to him:

"Osman, you are to shoot those horses. Before you do so, you will put your mouth close to the ear of each horse and say, 'You have now worked enough on the earth. Your mistress fears you might in your old age fall into the hands of cruel men, and she therefore dismisses you from her service now.'" [1]

This however was not altogether a new practice, for if Lady Hester at any time discovered that any of her animals had been used contrary to her orders, the servant was instantly dismissed and the animal shot in his presence.

Before Dr. Meryon left Djoun Lady Hester Stanhope requested him to do her one last kindness. She had determined to wall up the entrance to her house, and she begged him to superintend the workmen. He writes:

"On Monday, July 30, 1838, the mason had been sent for from Sayda,[2] and materials had been collected for walling up the gateway. Lady Hester drew out on paper the exact

[1] *Memoirs,* iii. 238. [2] *I.e.* Sidon.

manner in which she wished it to be done. It was a screen which completely masked the gateway, and left one side-opening just large enough to admit a cow, or an ass laden with water. I superintended this work of self-inhumation, the like of which never entered woman's mind before. It was an affair of two days." [1]

Dr. Meryon was sent on the 7th February 1838 to superintend the removal of the effects which had been "rotting and spoiling," as he says, since the death of poor Miss Williams. He wrote: [2]

"Heavens! what waste was I witness to! In one closet was a beautiful wax miniature of Mr. Pitt, a portrait of the Duke of York, some other pictures, stationery, glass, china, medicines, etc., enough for a family. In one room were carpets, cushions, counterpanes, mattresses, pillows, all completely destroyed by mould and damp. In a store-room were large Japan canisters with tea, preserves, sugar, wine, lamps, etc. From another room (the roof of which had fallen in at the time of a great earthquake) had disappeared, according to Lady Hester's account, three hundred-

[1] *Memoirs*, iii. 286. [2] *Ibid.* ii. 250.

weight of copper utensils in cauldrons, boilers, saucepans, kettles, round platters, and many other things. A leather portmanteau lay with the lock cut out; a trunk had its hinges wrenched off; both were emptied of their contents. Everywhere proofs of pillage were manifest, and the village of Abra was notoriously thriving by it. For ten years this plundering system had been going on, and yet what still remained would have almost filled a house. Among other things were papers and boxes of seeds, roots, dried plants, and a variety of such matters, which Lady Hester had collected. 'For,' she would say, 'the importance of people's pursuits is judged in a different way by different individuals. For example, Sir Joseph Banks would think I had done wonders if I found a spider that had two more joints than another in his hind-leg; and Sir Abraham Hume would embrace me if I had got a coin not in his collection; but I have hoarded up something for everybody. And yet, whether I have done good for humanity or for science, those English give me credit for nothing, and never even once ask how I got into debt.'"

Dr. Meryon wrote to the German gentleman in attendance on Prince Pückler Muskau

to explain his departure, for when he had mentioned his intention of returning to Europe, the Prince had said, "But you will never leave Miladi whilst she is so ill?" These words were always in Dr. Meryon's mind, in spite of Lady Hester's constant exclamation "Doctor, you are of no use to me. What good can you do me? I am just as well without you." Dr. Meryon told the Prince that he was forced to go by Lady Hester herself, "and deeply regretted that he had to leave her without a single European near her person, and without a single servant in whom she had confidence." Still, he felt sure that she was in no personal danger, however fiercely the war might rage between the Druzes and the Pasha, for he "knew the firmness and intrepidity of her character, the resources of her mind, and the respect and dread in which the two hostile parties held her."

When the time came for Dr. Meryon to leave, Lady Hester seemed to dread his going. He paid three forfeits to the captain of the vessel he had hired to take his family to Europe, but the captain at last became importunate and would wait no longer. Lady

Hester still believed "that her constitution was invulnerable, and still dwelt with the same confidence on the advent of the new Messiah, when the Sultan would be triumphant, her enemies confounded, her debts paid, and an ample income placed at her disposal." She declared that she had no personal fear, although, if the Christians settled in the Lebanon gave heed to bad advice, it might not be impossible that half the Franks in the country would be massacred. She added :

"Religion is with me neither more nor less than a costume of adoration ; it is all one whether that costume is green, white, blue, or black. To me it is all the same whether a man prostrates himself before a piece of wood, or before a cockle-shell as the Metoualis do, provided his heart addresses itself to the Almighty." [1]

On Monday the 6th August 1838, Dr. Meryon writes that he took an affectionate leave of Lady Hester Stanhope, and never saw her more. On the 7th he and his family left Djoun and proceeded on mules to Sidon,

[1] *Memoirs*, iii. 280.

their servants walking beside them.[1] Dr. Meryon adds:

"As we quitted that terrace where we had passed nearly fifteen months, my wife and daughter shed tears. The black girl Zezefoon was seen looking after us from the garden-wall, where she had kept watch from the dawn, and it was now eleven in the day. When we were about two miles on the road a servant was descried running after us. My heart beat, I knew not what might have happened. But his business was to deliver a bag he had on his shoulders, in which was a small Turkey carpet for spreading on the cabin-floor in our vessel; and this Lady Hester had sent, with a message that perhaps we might find it serviceable on the voyage. Thus even to the last moment did her kind consideration for our comfort manifest itself."

Lady Hester Stanhope's garden was now her only pleasure, and there she would sit for hours in silence, her eyes fixed on the distant line of quivering Mediterranean blue which bounded the horizon of her world. She had often said that she would never return to

[1] *Memoirs*, iii. 289.

Europe but in chains, and she undoubtedly meant it.

She occasionally wrote to Dr. Meryon, who had settled at Nice, but she seldom mentioned herself. In October 1838 she spoke of the illness of all her servants. "Everybody is laid up here," she wrote: "Logmagi with a bad fever, so also Mustafa and the cowboy; Mohammed with a fit of the gout, unable to walk or stir; the girl Fatoûm half ill, half with whims, always under her coverlet; Zezefoon ill, but keeping to her work." Lady Hester's last letter to Dr. Meryon was written on the 6th May 1839, and she then spoke of herself as better in health than she had been. But the truth was that she was very ill, and had been very ill for several months. She had no medical advice and no comforts; no nurse, no friend, was near her, and she was now in her sixty-fourth year.

Suddenly she felt in need of assistance, and sent a messenger to Beyrout for a doctor, but before any one could reach Djoun Lady Hester had died,—as she had lived for so many years, alone. On the 22nd June, a Saturday, she had told her servants that she felt sure she

should not be alive the next evening, and she was right. Twenty-eight Mahometan Arabs formed her household at the time of her death, but not a single European was within many miles of her.

The formal announcement of Lady Hester's death was issued by the Austrian Consul-General at Beyrout :

"Aujourd'hui, 23 juin 1839, à deux heures après midi, Lady Hester Stanhope, miladi, a expiré, après une longue maladie qui ne s'était agravée que depuis peu de jours."

As soon as Mr. Moore, the British Consul at Beyrout, heard of Lady Hester Stanhope's death he set out for Djoun, taking with him an American Missionary named Thomson. They rode over the mountains and reached Djoun at ten o'clock at night on Sunday the 23rd June, after a journey of eleven hours. The servants told them that Lady Hester had been ill for at least three months, and that during that time she had never gone even into her garden, although she had pointed out the spot she had chosen in it for her grave. The Consul and the Missionary entered her room

alone: Lady Hester's body was lying peacefully on her bed, the features composed and placid, without traces of suffering. Her sad and stormy life was over, and she was at rest at last.

At midnight on that June Sunday Lady Hester Stanhope's corpse was placed in a simple coffin, and carried by her Arab servants to the grave in her own private garden. The Consul and the Missionary followed, and the Missionary read the service of the Church of England over her by the light of torches and lanterns. The Missionary wrote: "I have rarely seen a more beautiful place; neither time, labour, nor expense had been spared to convert this barren hill into a wilderness of shady avenues, and a paradise of sweet flowers."

Inside the house there was nothing but confusion. The Missionary writes:

"Thirty-five rooms had been sealed up by the Vice-Consul to prevent robbery. They were full of trash. One had forty or fifty French oil jars, old, empty, and dusty. Another room was crammed with the Arab saddles once used by Lady Hester Stanhope's

mounted guard, now moth-eaten, tattered, and torn. Superannuated pipe-stems, without bowls, filled one room. Two more were devoted to medicines, and another room to books and papers, mostly in boxes and ancient chests. Nothing of much value was found anywhere, and the seals were replaced, to await legal action. The crowd of servants and greedy retainers had appropriated to themselves her most valuable effects.

"As Lady Hester died of a lingering disease they had time enough to work their will, and nothing valuable escaped their rapacity.

"Lady Hester Stanhope would sometimes sit through the longest night with Mr. Moore, the Consul at Beyrout, and his wife, talking over the stirring times of her youth with exhaustless spirit and keen delight. But nothing could tempt her back to England. . . . In her mountain nest, and all alone, she dragged out the remnant of her days in haughty pride and stubborn independence. Lady Hester Stanhope was wholly and magnificently unique."[1]

An English friend wrote of his unfeigned sorrow at the death of "so highly gifted, so honourably minded, and so extraordinary a

[1] *The Land and the Book,* by Rev. Dr. Thomson.

person as was Lady Hester Stanhope," who had made the deepest impression on him forty years before, in her father's house at Chevening.

Those days in England seem far away indeed when Dr. Meryon's description of her rooms at Djoun in 1838 is read.

"The beam of the ceiling of the apartment in which Lady Hester ordinarily sat was propped up by two unsightly spars of wood, for fear the whole ceiling should fall on her head, and these props stood in the centre of the room. Her bedroom was still worse, for there the prop of the ceiling was the rough unplaned trunk of a poplar tree, cut at the foot of the hill on which her house stood." [1]

In May 1849, ten years after Lady Hester Stanhope's death, Djoun was visited by Eliot Warburton, and described by him in *The Crescent and the Cross.*[2]

"As the sun rose over the Lebanon we forded the river Damour, which runs into the sea from a beautiful valley among banks and islands thickly strewn with oleander. . . . Sweeping along over hill and vale, rock and

[1] Preface to *Memoirs.*
[2] Chapter xix.

sandy bay, we came in sight of the venerable city of Sidon. Thence we turned off to the left towards the mountains, through mulberry and olive groves, passing along the banks of a river spanned with antique bridges and overhung with pleasant shade. The views were fine and various, deep rich valleys sprinkled occasionally with a flat-roofed cottage, a vineyard, or a mill; a capricious stream gliding or rushing along under its oleander shade; steep hills speckled with grey crags, or overgrown with the bay-tree and the myrtle; here a town with a very fortress-look crowned some steep acclivity, or a wood of sycamores gloomed over the pale rocks.

"It was late when we came in sight of two high conical hills, on one of which stands the village of Djoun. On the other is a circular wall over which dark trees were waving, and this was the place in which Lady Hester Stanhope had finished her strange and eventful career. It had formerly been a convent, but the 'Prophet-Lady' had converted its naked walls into a palace, and its wilderness into gardens.

"The sun was setting as we entered the enclosure, and we were soon scattered about the open court, picketing our horses. The

buildings that constituted the palace were of a very scattered and complicated description, covering a wide space, but only one storey in height. Courts and gardens, stables and sleeping-rooms, halls of audience and ladies' bowers, were strangely intermingled. Heavy weeds were growing everywhere among the open portals, and we forced our way with difficulty through a tangle of roses and jessamine to the inner court. Here choice flowers once bloomed and fountains played in marble basins,—but now was presented a scene of the most melancholy desolation.

"As the watch-fire blazed up, its gleam fell upon masses of honeysuckle and woodbine; on white mouldering walls beneath, and dark waving trees above; while the group of mountaineers who gathered round its light, with their long beards and vivid dresses, completed the strange picture.

"After a hurried breakfast we strolled over the extensive grounds. Here many a broken arbour or trellis, bending under masses of jessamine and honeysuckle, show the care and taste that were once lavished on this wild but beautiful hermitage. A garden-house, surrounded by an enclosure of roses run wild, lies in the midst of a grove of myrtle and bay trees. This was Lady Hester's

favourite resort during her life-time, and now, within its silent enclosure, 'After life's fitful fever, she sleeps well.' The hand of ruin has dealt very sparingly with all these interesting relics. The Pasha's power by day, and the fear of spirits by night, keep off marauders; and though we made free with broken benches and fallen doorposts for fuel, we reverently abstained from displacing anything in the establishment except a few roses, which there was no living thing but bees and nightingales to regret.

"It was one of the most striking and interesting spots I ever visited; its silence and beauty, its richness and desolation, lent to it a touching and mysterious character that suited well the memory of that strange Hermit-Lady who has made it a place of pilgrimage even in Palestine."

Mr. Thomson revisited Djoun in 1857, eighteen years after Lady Hester Stanhope's death, and he found that the place had been entirely destroyed. He wrote:

"A melancholy change has indeed come over the scene since first I visited it. The garden with its trellised arbours and shaded valleys and countless flowers is utterly destroyed, and not one room of Lady Hester's

large establishment remains entire. That ruin on the south-west corner, was the apartment in which Lady Hester wore out the three last dreary months of her life; and in this on the east of it we found her body, when the whole of these premises were alive with her servants. Now not a dog, or a cat, or even a lizard, appears to relieve the utter solitude. Her tomb, also, is sadly changed. It was then embowered in dense shrubbery and covered with an arbour of running roses, not a vestige of which now remains, and the stones over the grave itself are broken and displaced. There is no inscription, not a word in any language is to be found, and unless more carefully protected than hitherto the last resting-place of Lady Hester Stanhope will soon be entirely lost."

The property at Djoun belonged, not to Lady Hester Stanhope herself, but to the monastery on the Lebanon, and the monks were anxious to sell it. This they succeeded in doing on her death, and the purchaser was a Mussulman, who tore down the buildings, sold the materials, and destroyed most of the gardens, leaving the wall built by Lady Hester.

Djoun was visited in the winter of 1895 by Lady Hester Stanhope's niece, the Duchess of Cleveland, and her description of the place, quoted by permission, forms a fitting conclusion to this short account of Lady Hester's life.

"1895, WEDNESDAY, *December* 4 . . . A hot cloudless summer's day. . . . From Saida the first part of our way lay along the sands of the seashore, which the road to Beyrout follows for the whole distance; then we turned inland, among the gardens and orchards of 'flowery Sidon,' which produce some of the finest fruit in the world; the oranges, I am told, are celebrated. Every now and then came a whiff of scent from a cassia tree. The track was of rolling stones, like a rough watercourse. We followed the course of the river Anwàli, which irrigates all this little plain, crossed it on a bridge said to date from the Roman times, and at once began the ascent of the mountains. They are all rocks and brushwood, at this season quite brown, though the last rains have brought out patches of bright green, and in another fortnight there will be verdure everywhere. But they are beautiful even now, rising tier above tier in endless variety, grouping themselves anew at

each turn of the road, and clear-cut against the blue sky. The sun was very hot, and the 'road' ill-deserved the name: it more resembled a wild-goat's path, clambering over great boulders of rock; but the horses climbed like cats. The country seemed very lonely: we met only an occasional shepherd or goatherd.

"At last, turning a shoulder of the mountain, we came in sight of Djoun (now spelt Jun), built on a steep slope overlooking a beautiful little valley watered by the Anwàli, full of gardens and olive-groves, some of them containing very fine trees. The houses are well built, of white stone, and it is, the Consul at Saida says, a thriving place that has doubled its population since Lady Hester's time. Thence a wild clamber over very rough ground led us up the mountain on which stood her house. Fifteen years ago the house was already a complete ruin, but the garden remained, allowed to run wild, but with some flowers still lingering on the terraces. Now, alas! garden and terraces alike have disappeared; the ground has been let to a farmer, ploughed up, and planted with mulberries. Only some of the olives and orange trees that Lady Hester planted are left, and the exact place of her burial cannot be determined, as nothing remains of the vault.

"The Consul brought us an old man who had been in Lady Hester's service as a boy and was fourteen at the time of her death, who pointed out where he thought her grave had been, and showed us the point on (what had been) the upper terrace, where she used to stand and watch through her glass the ships passing on the distant sea,—with what feelings who can say? Did she never wish herself on board, with all sails set, spreading her wings for flight? We cannot tell; we can scarcely even picture her to ourselves in such changed surroundings, for everything that was here in her time is gone. Her arbours and trellises, her alleys and fountains, her alcoves and terraces, have all disappeared; her groves of myrtles and bay trees are cut down, and every flower she planted rooted up.

"Yet we can at least stand in the same place where she stood and look out on the same view—and what a view it is! The situation of Djoun is simply magnificent, overlooking from its isolated mountain top the whole country round, far and near, with the luxuriant valley traversed by the Anwàli and all its groves and gardens nestling at its foot. On every side except one it is surrounded by the towering crests of the Lebanon; but to the west a wide opening, like a great portal,

discloses the glorious expanse of the Mediterranean and frames in its broad mirror of dazzling blue. Lady Hester's private garden fronted this wonderful view, and almost the only corner of the building left standing, the south-west angle which contained her own rooms, looks out upon it. From them a door opened, through which at any moment she could wander out among the flowers she loved so well.

"Djoun must have been a large place, for the garden wall, still existing, encloses a considerable extent of ground. It was all built of the white stone of the country, which remains as fresh and clean as when it left the quarry. There is now no possibility of tracing the rooms, and the farmer has added a building to lodge himself and his family. A mat was spread on the ground for us under one of Lady Hester's great orange trees, now loaded with fruit, and here we ate our luncheon. . . .

"I never saw my poor Aunt Hester. She left England nine years before I was born, and our homes were three thousand miles asunder. But I have always felt a strong interest in her striking and original character, warm sympathy in her misfortunes, and deep compassion for her sad fate."

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